

Gender, Empowerment, and Hegemonic Masculinity: analyzing social
relations among cooperative recyclers in São Paulo, Brazil

by

Neil Nunn
BA, Simon Fraser University, 2007

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

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This project explores the gender relations among a group of recyclers belonging to a consortium of nine recycling cooperatives in the ABC region of São Paulo, Brazil. Employing a feminist geographical lens and participatory research methodologies I examine these uniquely gendered spaces. This thesis is divided into four sections. Each section is written in an attempt to improve understandings of the ways in which the spaces of the recycling cooperatives are gendered.

In the first section I provide information that frames the thesis and the larger research project. I begin this section by providing a geographical and socio-economic overview of the region where the research took place. This is followed by a discussion of my research methodology, a literature review of the relationship between women, solid waste, and labour in Brazil, and a look at my reflexive positioning as a researcher on this project.

Section two explores the relationship between gender, empowerment and equity among cooperative recyclers involved with this study. This section poses the question: in what

ways has the recycling cooperative allowed for women to inspire personal and social change and have the power to influence the institutions that affect their lives? I argue that the recycling cooperatives involved with this study are spaces where individuals who have traditionally lacked access to power are granted the opportunities to empower themselves.

Section three is about performed social relations, specifically the role of hegemonic masculinity in shaping gendered space within the recycling cooperatives. Drawing from qualitative research data, this section critically explores the deployment of power within the lives of the cooperative recyclers. First, I explore the concept of hegemonic masculinity, and suggest its importance for understanding gendered space. Second, I draw on my personal research experiences and qualitative data to provide a spatial examination of the most salient aspects of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of the female cooperative recyclers. Third, I support the notion that masculine domination is not something only established by men and designed to oppress women, but women themselves can construct and reinforce hegemonic masculinities.

Section four concludes the study by highlighting apparent shortcomings of the research and implications for future research. Concerned with apparent contradictions between the arguments in sections two and three, I provide a discussion of the multiplicities of space and explain that such contradictions are inherent to the nature of social space. Following this I offer a critical self-reflection of my methodology where I discuss my complicity in reproducing gender binaries and post-colonial research practices.

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1. Introduction

In the last two decades feminist geography has made radical and refreshing contributions to the field of geography. During its short history the progressive sub-discipline has brought women and issues pertaining to their lives to the forefront and returned the focus of analysis to the (often overlooked) materialities of the everyday (Johnson 2008; Pratt 2006; Dyck 2005; Rose 1993). Feminist Geography has also centred its attention on embracing the fractured, multiple, performed, and discursively produced aspects of daily life and connecting these details to larger institutions, social movements and hegemonies have grown to become central to feminist geography (Dyck 2005).

The establishment of feminist geography as an important sub-discipline in geography was landmarked by the 1994 launching of *Gender, Place and Culture (GPC)*, a journal for critical feminist geographers. The journal was launched simultaneously with the cultural turn in human geography and has served as an important space for asking questions about identity and difference, while directing a number of transformative and political agendas (Johnson 2008).

My interest for using a feminist geographical lens in this research stems from my desire to make sense of the way networks of power marginalize certain groups while empowering others. In this thesis I am particularly drawn to the way feminist geography has allowed me to observe these networks of power while rethinking the taken-for-granted, mundane and routine details of everyday life within the cooperative recycling sector. “Attention to the local, therefore, provides a methodological entry point to

theorizing the operation of processes at various scales – from the body to the global” (Dyck 2005: 234).

Each section of this thesis supports the idea that feminist research is ongoing, multifaceted, reflexive and collective. I have organized this thesis into four sections, each section motivated by the opportunity to come to a clearer understanding of the ways that gender and power operate among members of a group of recycling cooperatives in Brazil.

In the first section I frame the study by providing background information about the project. In this section I provide the geographical and socio-economic context of the ABC region of São Paulo, my research methodology, a discussion of my reflexive positioning as a researcher on this project and a literature review that outlines work previous work written that relates to women, solid waste, and labour in Brazil.

In the second section I explore the ways that empowerment and equity are promoted among cooperative recyclers. This section raises the question: in what ways has the recycling cooperative allowed for women to inspire personal and social change and have the power to influence institutions that affect their lives? Here I argue that the recycling cooperative is a space where individuals who have traditionally lacked access to power are granted the opportunities to empower themselves.

In the third section I explore the ways that hegemonic masculinity exists within the cooperative and is shaped by cooperative recyclers. Here I pose the question: what are the ways that hegemonic masculinity is manifested within the cooperatives and how are notions of masculine domination understood, interpreted and (re)produced? I address this question in three ways; first, I explore the concept of hegemonic masculinity, and suggest its importance for understanding gendered space. Second, I draw from research

experiences and qualitative data, to detail the most salient aspects of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of female cooperative recyclers. Third, I demonstrate how women themselves have actively constructed and reinforced hegemonic masculinities within the cooperatives.

Sections two and three have been drafted as two separate manuscripts prepared for submission to academic journals pertaining to the fields of geography, gender, organizational, and developmental studies. Since sections two and three have been drafted independently, each has a distinct focus and poses unique research questions.

In section four I conclude the study by highlighting apparent shortcomings of my research and implications of this study for future research. Concerned with apparent contradictions between the arguments in sections two and three, I provide a discussion of the multiplicities of space and explain that such contradictions are inherent to the nature of social space. Following this I offer a critical self-reflection of my methodology where I discuss my complicity in reproducing gender binaries and post-colonial research practices.

1.1 Research Background

In August 2009 I travelled to Brazil to conduct the field research for this study. During the data collection process I began broadly exploring gender issues that existed among recycling cooperatives within the organized informal¹ 'cooperative' waste management sector. This project primarily involved six cooperatives (Cooper Pires,

¹Informal waste management refers to efforts outside government regulated waste management frameworks to collect re-usable and recyclable material from the streets, dumpsites, or landfills, and reincorporate these goods into the economy (Moreno-Sanchez & Moldanado 2006; Peter and Jaffe 2004). Since the recycling cooperatives involved with this study are both organized and partially located in the informal sector, this study refers to the work done by recycling cooperatives as organized informal waste-management.

Maua, Cooperlimpa, Refazendo, Vila Popular, and Coopercoese). Four other cooperatives were also involved (Raio de Luz, Chico Mendes, Nova Conquista, Tobaño), however less directly². These ten cooperatives are located in the ABC region of São Paulo, Brazil and belong to an associated group of cooperatives called Coop-cent ABC³. Coop-cent ABC is a network of recycling cooperatives that collaborate resources, communicate and assist each other through the sharing of knowledge and equipment and the collective commercialization of materials to achieve a higher price from the industry. This research is a continuation of a series of three community workshops that took place between 2007-2009 and also explored gender-based issues within the cooperatives. The workshops provided a foundation for my research, while also allowing the cooperative members the opportunity to reflect on the way in which gender asymmetries operate in their daily lives.

This research project was conducted as part of a larger formal research project known as Participatory Sustainable Waste Management⁴ (PSWM). PSWM is a University Partnership in Cooperation and Development (UPCD) project, funded through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The PSWM project helps to develop a space for dialogue and knowledge exchange through capacity building, while also facilitating dialogue with governments and communities about issues surrounding solid waste management and consumption. The PSWM project is dedicated to assisting

² It is important to note that although all the cooperatives follow a cooperative structure, some of the groups participating in this project are not legally structured cooperatives.

³ More details regarding Coop-cent ABC can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TO-ITfHcuTU>

⁴ More information regarding the PSWM project can be found at: <http://pswm.uvic.ca/en/welcome/index.html>

recycling co-operatives in the metropolitan region of São Paulo to enhance the efficiency and safety of the collection, processing and commercialization of recyclable materials.

Working with Coop-cent ABC proved to be especially beneficial for my research efforts as it provided me the opportunity to familiarize myself with the culture and the social dynamics of a range of cooperatives in the organized informal waste-management sector. The association of Coop-cent ABC is a unified group dedicated to analyzing and improving the socio-economic situations of the organized recyclers in the ABC region of São Paulo. Members of Coop-cent ABC voluntarily offered their support and involvement to this research and actively participated in the study.

1.2 Study site: Sao Paulo (ABC region)

There are more than 10,000 homeless people in the metropolitan region of São Paulo (figure 1-1), and it is estimated that approximately 5,000 people are dependent on informal recycling for their primary source of income (PSWM Project Report n.d.). In the 1990s, to deal with problems associated with solid municipal waste, the mayors of the municipalities came together to create the study group on solid waste (*GT-Resíduos Sólidos*) at the Inter-municipal Consortium of the Greater ABC (*Consórcio do Grande ABC*) (PSWM Project Report n.d.). Originally, three region consisted of three municipalities: Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo, and São Caetano do Sul. Later, the region became known as ABCD, with the addition of the city of Diadema and today the municipalities of Mauá, Ribeirão Pires and Rio Grande da Serra have been added to the consortium (Consórcio Intermunicipal Grande ABC n.d.).

Although once considered an economic ‘powerhouse’ in Brazil, since the 1970s the ABC region of São Paulo has been characterized by economic inequality, poverty,

pollution and informal ‘squatter’ settlements (UN-Habitat 2001). In the 1990s the region was affected by a series of macro-economic events that resulted in drastic downturn in the economic, environmental and social situations (UN-Habitat 2001).



Figure 1-1 Map of the São Paulo and the ABC region (cartography: Ole Heggen)

At the end of the millennium, labor markets in the ABC region followed a trend of increased informalization (UN-Habitat 2001). A study that focused on the informal labour markets in the ABC region showed that in 1998-1999 the informal sector accounted for 32 percent of total employment in the ABC region and 89 percent (295,000 people) of those located in the tertiary sector (UN-Habitat 2001).

The member’s of the recycling cooperatives involved with this study belong to a lower socio-economic class. Among the 58 cooperative members surveyed in the study, the average monthly wage of the workers was 469.34 reais⁵ per month, lower than the 2010 national minimum wage of 510 reais per month. Although the gender composition

⁵ During the time of the time of the data collection (December 01, 2009) one Canadian dollar was equal to 1.655 Brazilian reais, and one American dollar was equal to 1.74 Brazilian reais.

is different in each cooperative, among the cooperatives involved with this research, overall there were more women than men members. Out of the 248 members of the cooperatives involved with this research, 103 were men and 145 women.

According to Medina (2007), the most dynamic informal recycling cooperative movement in the world exists in Brazil. In 2007 Coopermare, a recycling cooperative located in São Paulo collected 100 tons of recyclables a month, the equivalent to half of the total amount collected by the official recycling program of the municipality of São Paulo (Medina 2007). Medina (2007) also observed that Coopermare collected at a lower operating cost than the municipal system and cooperative members earned double the minimum wage in Brazil.

1.3 Methodology

My personal discontent and struggles with dominant masculine macro social structures in politics, popular culture, knowledge creation and religion have inspired me to explore the ways that gendered power asymmetries, sub-alternity, hegemonies and counter-hegemonies operate spatially. Two broad research questions guided the early stages of my research. (1) What are the gender-based disparities that exist in the cooperative waste management sector? (2) In what ways do the recycling cooperatives involved with this study promote equity?

1.3.1 Epistemology

My epistemology is of utmost importance to my methodology as it designates the methods I choose and the manner in which I employ these methods. Two paradigmatic philosophies, feminist geography and post-structuralist thought, have been central in shaping my epistemology. These theoretical positionings have helped to inform my belief

that the unequal power relations that exist among various genders, classes and ethnicities are a result of social and performative processes and do not have some natural or necessary existence.

1.3.2 Post-structuralist geographies

I understand post-structuralism to be a loose set of concepts and ideas that allow for a more thorough analysis of resistance, human communication and other dynamic social interplays. Post-structuralists have traditionally focused on meaning and explore the connection between meaning and power and the ways that meaning is produced and contested (Kenway et al. 1994). Many post-structuralist thinkers explore how many taken for granted notions are constructed through language, stories, symbols, images, terminology and are important for understanding the “character of society” (Robbins 2004: 65).

For post-structuralist meaning and ‘truth’ co-exist in a dialectical fashion and both are an effect of power. Truth (and its associated meaning) are created through social communication and enforce social themes, categories and definitions that appear intuitive or taken for granted (Robbins 2004). Truth is central to many of Michel Foucault’s understandings of post-structuralism and is understood by him “as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” (Foucault, 1980: 133). Foucault refers to dominant grand narratives as a “regime of truth” and described this regime as being “linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and the affects of power which induces and which extend it” (Foucault, 1980: 133). Uncovering the hidden history of truths,

elucidating their inevitability, and revealing their part in reinforcing the power of specific categories is an important project of post-structuralists (Robbins 2004).

Often post-structuralism is considered to be a liberating mechanism, used as a “theory of and for change” (Kenway et al. 1994: 189) and rests on the premise that itself as a theory is inherently incomplete, evolving and subject to critique. The fluidity and necessarily incomplete nature of post-structuralism, despite being challenging to apply to the social world, allows one to identify and rethink the dominant and grand narratives that are obscured and written into the daily practice of even the most critical post-structuralists.

A significant challenge for me as a post-structuralist, has been addressing the tension between applying my thoughts, verbal comments and written pieces in a completely post-structuralist fashion while existing in and having been raised in a world not congruent with post-structural thought. Despite my attempt to critically apply this theoretical framework to every aspect of this thesis, I recognize that some words and concepts I have used may not be consistent with post-structural thought. Despite this tension post-structuralism continues to shape the way I view the world while giving me the tools to critically examine social situations and continue to expand my theoretical limits as a researcher.

1.3.3 Feminist Geographies

Feminist geography examines the way in which identity is spatialized and looks at gender and the impact it has for contextualizing the meaning of place (Moss 2002). Feminist geography prides itself in being a transformative discipline (Moss 2002) and draws on politics and theories of power to explore the way in which space and gender are

mutually transformative (Johnson et al. 2006). Feminist geography seeks to emancipate and empower the subaltern in society by linking power to knowledge and challenging what is considered valid knowledge and who has traditionally been considered the knower (Ackerly et al. 2006; Moss 2002, Naples 2003; 2006; Steans 2006; Sprague 2005). More recently feminist geographies have drawn on a wider range of social and cultural theories that often implicate drawing from such paradigms as post-structuralism and post-modernism to better understand how gendered spatial relations are formed (Johnson et al. 2006; Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi 2008).

Since the 1990's post-structuralisms influence on feminist geography has resulted in paradigmatic shifts within the discipline and resulted in enhanced understandings of research practice, performativity, material cultures, and the nature of academic knowledge (Johnson 2008). This being said, there is nothing uniquely feminist about post-structuralism (Kenway et al. 1994). Only once inequitable gendered power relationships are applied to post-structuralist theory does post-structuralism become feminist (Kenway et al. 1994).

Post-structuralism has been especially useful as a theoretical tool for many feminists, helping to deconstruct canonical objective 'truths' and creating cracks in socially constructed grand narratives (Moss 2006). This 'cracking' of grand narratives has allowed for the production of alternate meanings and provides an opportunity to question power asymmetries (Murdoch 2006).

1.3.4 Methods

As the principle researcher of this gender-focused development project I conducted field research over a six-month period in São Paulo, Brazil. A considerable

amount of my time in the field was dedicated to enhancing my Portuguese language skills, attending meetings and participating in informal recycler's gatherings. It was not until the last two months that I began the formal data collection process. For this project I used four principal methods to gather the primary data: interviews, focus groups, survey and visual methodology.

First, I conducted 20 one-on-one open-ended interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and respondents were selected based on their gender, leadership role, willingness to be interviewed and insightful perspectives regarding gender dynamics within the co-operative. The respondents included both male and female cooperative members, cooperative leaders and residents of São Paulo not related to the cooperative. Previous to the interviews I had created a list of interview question and during the interview, depending on the nature of our conversation, I selected the questions from the list that I deemed to be the most fitting at the time.

Second, I conducted five focus groups (four with women and one with men) that involved three cooperatives. Due to limitations that came with Portuguese being a second language, I received assistance with the focus groups from two researchers from the PSWM project in Brazil. One individual helped with technical and administrative details (filming; signing of the consent forms; organizing refreshments), and the other helped with the facilitating of the focus groups. Previous to group discussions the facilitator and I discussed and determined the topics and questions that were to be presented during the focus group. Discussions generally centered on gendered differences, roles, ideals and points of discontent at home and the workplace. The focus groups were recorded with a

video camera, and later transcribed with the help of two research assistants I had met during my time in Brazil.

Third, I conducted a fifteen-question survey. The questions explored basic background information (age; sex; work position), details about domestic roles, and information about work roles and details about gender-based social issues like domestic violence. The questionnaire was completed by 58 participants and the male/female ratio of the respondents (23/35) is overall roughly the same as the gender ratio of the cooperatives involved with this project. I later input the data collect from the questionnaires into an excel spreadsheet and analyzed the spreadsheet looking for contextual information and salient trends. This method offered useful insight into such details as the ratio of males and female in the cooperatives, marital status, work positions, average earning and details about domestic and social reproductive roles.

Fourth, I collected data through a participant generated visual methodology (Guillemin and Drew 2010). This visual methodology focused on asking between 12-20 participants in three separate groups to draw daily work patterns and solutions to identified gender-based problems.

Drawing as a visual research methodology is used by researchers in many different contexts and is increasingly becoming considered a valid research method (Guillemin and Drew 2010; Nairn 2002). This method proved to be an effective way to allow individuals to express thoughts they would not otherwise feel comfortable verbalizing and effectively reveal values and beliefs instilled within individuals at the cooperative. Participants were either asked to depict their daily work situation, or what they perceived to be solutions to their social problems within the cooperative. For the

purposes of this study I interpreted these drawings quite literally and recognize that deeper levels of meanings do exist. While the drawings helped to inform my perspective of the cooperative, this methodology was used predominantly to inform the discussion in the introduction and section two.

1.3.5 Empirical data analysis and interpretation

In this thesis I attempt to address the proposed research questions by exploring and critically engaging with the my research experiences and research data collected during my time in the 'field'. The interviews and focus groups were recorded (interviews in audio format; focus groups in video format) and later transcribed by myself and with the help of research assistants. Due to my limited Portuguese, I initially transcribed the parts of the interview I was capable of interpreting accurately and then sent the partial transcriptions to one of three Brazilian-speaking students (from Canada and Brazil) who generously offered their time to help me with my research. These volunteer research assistants then reviewed my transcriptions and supplemented the sections I was unable to fully understand. The video recordings of the focus groups were all transcribed during my time in Brazil with the help of two geography students from the University of São Paulo.

After transcribing each of the focus groups and interviews, I began coding the data. Initially two salient themes emerged that directed my first round of coding (1) the existence of empowerment and equity and (2) hegemonic masculinity in the cooperatives. During the initial coding, various smaller sub-themes became visible that inspired the second round of coding.

While working with the data, I employed a content analysis methodology to interpret the transcribed interviews and focus groups. Content analysis refers to a

research method that seeks to make meaningful deductions from texts and other communicative material (Krippendorf 2004). Content analysis explores “freely occurring texts” and through analysis breaks them down to a more synthesised interpretation of the text’s meanings (Scott & Marshall 2009). Since human communication and discourse “does not merely reflect social processes and structures, such as the influence of gender as a social structure, but also affirms, consolidates, and therefore reproduces these existing social structures” (Gaszo 2005: 455), this study has relied a great deal on analyses of the communicative content captured during the focus groups and interviews and their implications for reproducing these fluid and dynamic social hierarchies. Once the major themes of the papers were identified, I searched for and identified common threads that extended through significant portions of focus groups and interviews, paying special attention to discussions that highlighted moments of empowerment and masculine epistemologies.

In section two and three I approached the data analysis in separate ways. In section two I began my analysis by highlighting all the key points of empowerment in the data. I then began to write more elaborately about the themes of empowerment that I had identified. Alternatively, I approached section three by allowing the theory inform my reading of the coded data. After I had thoroughly engaged with literature on hegemonic masculinity I began to explore the ways in which the concept applied to the data. By engaging with the relationship between the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and Judith Butler’s performativity, I began to notice the way that women were producing masculinity, and the ways that I could recognize this hegemonic masculinity operating among female spaces.

1.4 Reflexive positioning

Counter to traditional social science perspectives that view the personal experience to be a threat to a study's objectivity, the feminist approach sees personal experiences to be an asset to an individual's research (Tickner 2006). Since feminists are committed to reimagining asymmetrical exchanges of power, the positivist ethic of detachment reinforces a hierarchal ethic of differentiation between the research subject and the researcher (Tickner 2006).

Throughout this study I have attempted to decrease unequal power relations between myself and research participants by employing a research tool commonly used by feminist researchers known as reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the process of identifying the location of both the researcher and the research within networks and circuits of power (Tickner 2006; Haraway 1987; Moss 2002, Harding 1987). This recognition of imbalanced circuits of power is used to explore the way in which dialectic processes influence the research process and outcomes.

To feel comfortable in my role as a researcher I have found it important throughout my research to reflect on the power inequities and power relations that have influenced my research. Although there is no way to fully avoid denying my personal bias and my privileged position, the act of declaring one's personal predispositions affords *a more* sound analysis (Harding 1987) and allows one to more comfortably conduct research within a framework that is characterized by disparate power roles.

Despite my efforts to remain reflexive and not allow my privileged western views and ideals into my research, I am aware that the existence of this personal bias is an unavoidable component of the research process. The international development

relationship between Canada and Brazil, the fact that this project is funded by CIDA and the perceived superiority of Western academic institutions, for me, represents exploitative and patriarchal research relations. Because of this role I fill as a western researcher coming from a 'developed' country to research issues of 'underdevelopment' I am aware of my unfortunate complicity in reproducing post-colonial and patriarchal research relations.

Attempting to understand the way I was perceived and how my positioning affected the research process is a complicated task. Throughout the research process I feel that I was offered respect because of my country of origin, gender, education and being part of a research project that has benefitted the lives of cooperative members. Having said this, because of my limited ability to speak Portuguese, I feel this in many ways inverted hierarchal researcher/researched relation. In many research situations I feel that I came across as non-threatening and sometimes naïve. This reduced the level of intimidation for participants during the focus groups and interviews allowed for more free and open expression.

Having said this, while this is how I perceive my position to be accepted, I also feel it is not possible to know *exactly* how I was being perceived as a researcher. Throughout this research project, it has been more important for me to use critical reflexivity as a tool to guide my research and less important to attempt to detail the specific power dynamics between the research participants and myself.

1.5 Spatial divisions of work within the cooperative

Since it is known that the spatial is inextricably linked to the social and the social inseparable from the spatial, the workplace can be understood as a social process in

which circuits of power and knowledge define the manner in which space is shaped (Massey 1995). In this way the geography of work and employment can be understood both “in terms of social structures on which it rests and the social processes of which is the outcome” (Massey 1995: 65).

Within the spaces of the cooperative there exists a distinct socio-spatial order. The gendering of work within the workplace is arguably most evident through the occupational segmentation and the manner in which bodies are organized according to specific duties. These spatial patterns are attached to ideological beliefs about abilities and ideas of the ways in which stereotypes dictate the suitability of activities for each gender, thus restricting women’s access to male-dominated occupations (England & Lawson 2005). Within the organizational structure of the recycling cooperatives studied here there are six main positions, each of which have a clear gendered influence consistent with ideological beliefs.

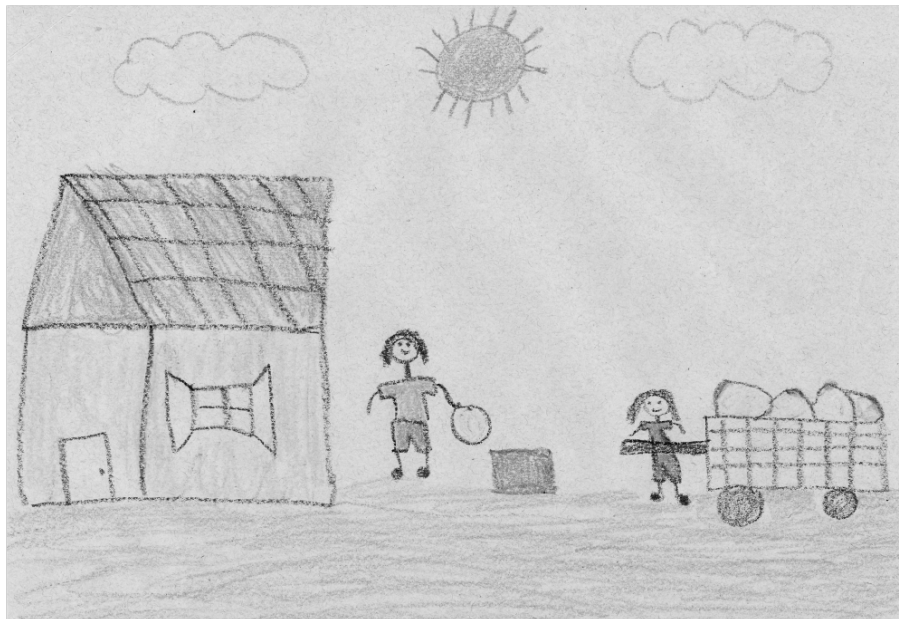


Figure 1-2 A female cooperative member from Vila Popular’s depiction of two female catadores

Catador(a) – The *catador(a)* is the most iconic figure of the informal waste management sector. The *catador(a)* is a recycler that pushes a handcart to collect discarded recyclable materials in the street. In Brazil the term *catador(a)* is used synonymously with anybody working in the informal waste management sector. The *catador(a)* is a common feature of the Brazilian urban landscape and is often the victim of great negative stigmatization and social exclusion from the public. Due to the fact that pushing the cart requires great strength it is most common for *catadores(as)* to be male. At times door-to-door collection is done in groups of two or three and often the women are designated, because of their perceived superior interpersonal skills, to speak to the individuals in the house and collect the recyclable materials.



Figure 1-3 Female cooperative member from Vila Popular's depiction of daily life in the cooperative. In this drawing the women are at the triage table and the man is collecting materials with the cart.

Triagem – *Triagem* describes the work activity of separating the recyclable materials that are redirected from the urban waste stream. The material separators generally work along a conveyor belt, long narrow table, or on the ground to sort large volumes of recyclable materials into the various categories. Often the municipal waste is brought to the cooperative by the *catador(a)* or by municipal ‘garbage’ trucks. *Triagem* is monotonous separation that requires very little training, strength or technical skill. Although men do participate in this role, it is much more common to find women in this position.

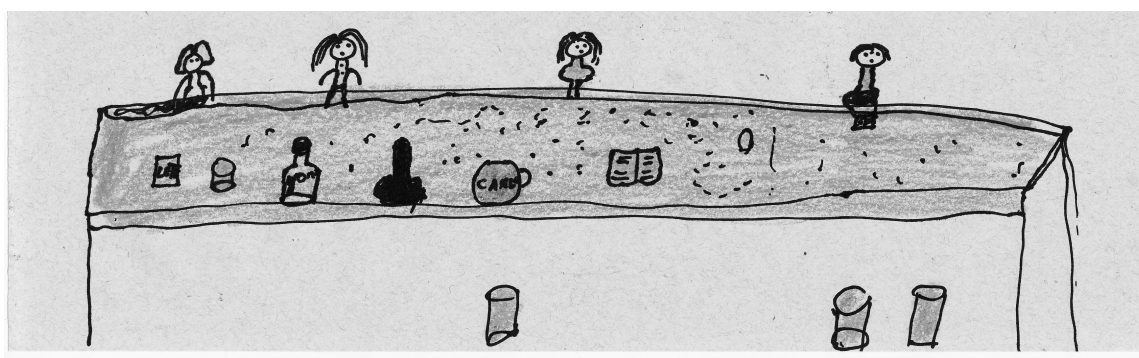


Figure 1-4 Cooperative member from Vila Popular’s depiction of four women separating recyclable materials at the triage table.

Lider de cooperativa – The *Lider de cooperativa* refers to the elected leader of the cooperative. The cooperative leader is a position that is respected among recycling cooperative members. The leader oversees the administrative and commercial transactions of the cooperative, she or he establishes and maintains the contacts with the recycling industries and is responsible for organizing the selling of the material to the recycling industry. The leader is in charge of coordinating collaborative efforts among local cooperatives and serves as a representative for the cooperative during meetings with the government and at regional recycler meetings.

Motorista – In the cases in which the cooperative owns or has access to a truck, the ‘*motorista*’ drives a large truck to transport materials from the cooperative to the industry. Aside from the cooperative leader, the ‘*motorista*’/truck transporter is arguable the most prestigious job at the cooperative. The job requires an individual to possess a driver’s license (which is not common for individuals in the cooperative to hold) and have the skills and confidence to drive a large transport vehicle. Although the female leader of the *Cooperco* cooperative is a ‘*motorista*’, this is a novel occurrence as it is very rare for women to fill this position.

Operador de prensagem – The *operador de prensagem* refers to the role of the material press operator. The material press operator stacks piles of recyclable material (plastics; paper; cardboard) in the hydraulic press and compresses them into large bundles. Although operating the press does not have the same amount of prestige as the *motorista* position it requires a certain amount of technical experience. It is not uncommon for women to fill this position, however it is more common for men to fill this role because of the heavy lifting involved.

1.5.1 Technology and gendered divisions of labour

In the recycling cooperative different types of jobs are designated by gender and therefore continue to shape and re-shape organizational spaces of work (Pacholok 2009; Massey 1995). This study recognizes that women’s under-representation in roles that require greater technical knowledge or skills is less a reflection of technical *ability* and more a representation of instilled ideas of which bodies ideally fit in particular work spaces.

To extend the discussions of the driver and press operator one step further, I draw from Cockburn's (1985) analysis of the intersections between gender, power and technology. For Cockburn, since knowledge and skills to operate machinery can be considered a form of power and machinery and technology is a primary source of economic power, the individuals who possess the experience, knowledge and ability to control technology are offered access to more highly valued roles and the power that accompanies them (Cockburn 1985). Therefore, since men control most jobs that require technical skills they sustain their access to this power and those without mechanical and technical skills become dependent on those who do (Cockburn 1985).

1.6 Contextualizing women, solid waste and labour in Brazil

When exploring the human relationship with waste and waste management, there exists a unique and important gender dimension that cannot be ignored. Although the relationship between waste and gender is a topic that has been under-researched, some studies have contributed to the discussion regarding the relationship between women and solid waste (Oates & McDonald 2006; Huong 2006; Maclaren & Thu 2003; Bulle 1999; Ali & Snell 1999, Wilson 1998). Speaking from a Latin American perspective, Wilson (1989) suggests that women engaged in the waste management industry have a unique relationship with movement of goods and materials, access to opportunities and the resources available to them. Due to a lack of available opportunities and gender-specific cultural and familial practice, women exist as a vulnerable and easily exploitable population (Wilson 1989). Even though occupations involving waste are often considered to be precarious, for mothers faced with balancing childcare and domestic duties, informal organized recycling is an important employment option. Informal organized

recycling provides a form of supplementary household income that allows the flexibility for women to balance work and domestic duties (Wilson 1989).

In a similar vein, Maclaren and Thu (2003) argue that women have a distinct relationship with waste and waste management and focus specifically on four aspects. First, within the waste sector, roles and responsibilities are distinctly organized by gender. Second, because of this gendered division of roles and responsibilities and the preconceived ideas attached to the various roles, women and men are ascribed different social status. Third, women have predetermined social roles as primary manager of domestic duties and education; this implies a unique relationship with waste education and management within the domestic sphere. Four, women's socially ascribed social reproduction and childcare responsibilities restrict their participation and mobility within the waste management sector.

In Buckingham, Reeves and Batchelor's (2008) study, *Wasting women: The environmental justice of including women in municipal waste management*, the authors observe that because of this unique relationship with waste it is important to consider women when discussing the politics and issues of risk and waste management. On the one hand the authors suggest that women's culturally designed and biological roles as care givers, mothers, educators, cleaners and primary health care providers find women particularly exposed and vulnerable to environmental hazards, chemicals and disease (Buckingham, Reeves & Batchelor 2008). While on the other hand, women have very little voice and play a minimal role in shaping political decision-making within formal political arenas that might play a role in addressing these hazards and concerns (Buckingham, Reeves & Batchelor 2008).

In many locations around the world waste management has been used as a tool to invent community-based and gender-based development projects that seek to empower individuals through education and collectively offering a voice to issues pertaining to waste management (Gutberlet 2009; Bushell & Goto 2006; Huong 2003). In Katmandu, a community-based empowerment project exists that has assisted the efforts of women to rally around local environment protection issues and to create awareness regarding waste management and consumption (Bushell & Goto 2006). This project has offered women the opportunity to shape the way that issues of health and resource management are imagined and addressed among local communities and has even influenced business practices by regulating the distribution of plastic packaging. As a non-profit initiative, the motivation for this project stems from a desire to provide educational opportunities that inspire individuals to protect their local environment and affect change at the most important levels of government.

More closely related to the scope of this study, Gutberlet's (2009) research outlines the relationship between women, recycling cooperatives and micro credit and how this marriage has generated opportunities and promoted empowerment for women in the collective commercialization of waste. Focusing on "participation as a strategy to build empowerment," Gutberlet (2009: 746) outlines an empowerment strategy in which women in the ABC region of São Paulo have relied on micro-credit as a key for creating more income in the waste collection and recycling industry. Throughout this process Gutberlet (2009) has discovered social inclusion and empowerment by offering a voice to women who have otherwise been voiceless.

1.7 Gender and labour roles in Brazil

In Brazil social and cultural perceptions of women's inferiority have and continue to shape their role in the work sector. Exploring the historical trends of gendered labour in Brazil helps to reconfirm this notion. During the second half of the 20th century, Brazil witnessed a dramatic shaping of female productive and reproductive roles. Between 1950 and 1980, the crude participation rate for women in the formal labour force grew from 13.6 percent to 26.9 percent and was followed by another dramatic increase to 47.2 percent by 1999 (IBGE 2001). This shift can be partially explained by the role of the authoritarian Brazilian state and the socio-economic changes brought on by the renowned "technocratization" process (Jaquette 1989). The technocratization process refers to dramatic socio-economic changes that were implemented by the government in the 1960s and 1970s that quickly expanded technical, scientific and professional education (Jaquette 1989). This process was so effective and widespread that between 1969 and 1975 alone the numbers of women attending Brazilian universities increased five-fold (Jaquette 1989).

Despite such dramatic increases in women's share of the labour force and education, generally, the activities that women occupied were still thought to be 'precarious' and under-valued socially and economically. By precarious labour I refer to a non-standard employment that is generally characterized by long work hours, poor pay, insecure positions and a low number of workers with registered working agreements (Vosko 2000, MacDonald & Campbell 2009). In Brazil today 12 million of women are considered to be placed in precarious job positions and of these 12 million, 74.8 percent have signed legal papers legitimizing them to work (Bruschini 2007).

Women's labour roles in Brazil are generally characterized by domestic and service activities (domestic duties; social reproductive duties; services sector work; homecare; childcare) and men are generally characterized by the participation in more traditional sectors (mechanized agricultural labour; modern manufacturing; traditional manufacturing; mechanization; construction). Paid domestic work is the main occupational niche for women in Brazil with 6.2 million women participating in the sector. In 2005 paid domestic work absorbed 17 percent of the total female workforce, with 90 percent of the individuals filling these services being female (Bruschini 2007).

In Brazil the perceived inferiority and negative framing of women has an important role in shaping labour roles. This negative framing of women is deeply ingrained in language and cultural beliefs about men and women. In the Brazil, like most other parts of the world, masculinity is often framed by what is not feminine, suggesting that "femininity is always 'the back drop' which masculinity is defined and constructed" (Kronsell 2006: 124).

The embeddedness of the negative framing of gender does not just take place in within the Brazilian work sector. We need only think about the type of language that rings through any playground in North America. "You throw like a girl!" and "sissy!" are both ubiquitously echoed by both boys and girls. These simple examples demonstrate how feminine identities, because of the meaning attached to words, are defined negatively.

1.7.1 Gender Ghettos

In the study, *Gender Ghettos: the Worldwide Segregation of Women and Men*, Charles and Grusky (2004) address the existence of hyper segregated "gender ghettos".

In their study they use the term gender ghetto to describe the phenomenon of women working in undervalued and underpaid positions. In these cases most commonly women work exclusively in spaces occupied by other women often coming into contact with men when serving them (Charles and Grusky 2004). They further describe this remaining occupational segregation to be a form of gender essentialism, or a deeply cultural inscribed assumption that men are best suited to fill positions which involve physical labour and technical tasks and that women are naturally suited to fill service positions and nurturing roles. These essentialist assumptions play a role in shaping what Charles and Grusky (2004) refer to as “gender ghettos”, a pervasive scenario in which a significant portion of women find themselves in underpaid and undervalued positions.

Of course, gendered occupational segregation is by no means a social feature that is unique to Brazil, as it is prevalent throughout most countries, political systems, religions and cultural environments and has an important significance for discursively shaping the way in which women are viewed by society (Anker 1992). In this way, gendered ideologies shape the cultural landscape and in turn (re)inscribe common notions pertaining to socially constructed roles (Winchester, Kong and Dunn 2003). This value attached to these roles, that individuals are perceived to be ‘capable’ of filling, has negative implications for one’s income and social status and reinforces the subaltern role and deficient social status for women (Anker 1992).

1.8 Research Ethics

In the Spring of 2008 my project proposal was reviewed by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board and given ethics approval. At the beginning of each focus group, participants were required to sign a waiver form that clearly stated the purpose and

objectives of the project. Additionally at the commencement of each interview after the voice recording device had been engaged, I informed participants that the interview was being recorded and asked for their consent. During the writing process the video footage was stored in a secured cabinet and sound files and transcriptions were stored on a password-protected computer and throughout the thesis participants were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

2. Cooperative recycling: equity, empowerment and the reinscription of gendered difference

2.1 Abstract

This section explores the relationship between gender, empowerment and equity, among cooperative recyclers involved with this study. This section poses the question: in what ways has the recycling cooperative allowed for women to inspire personal and social change and have the power to influence the institutions that affect their lives? I argue that the recycling cooperatives involved with this study are spaces where individuals who have traditionally lacked access to power are granted the opportunities to empower themselves.

2.1 Introduction

If an individual's performed social characteristics and rituals define one's gender, then an understanding of dominant social categories (gender; race; class) needs to focus on local spaces, institutions and collective values that performatively shape the finer details of one's daily practice. Feminist theorists have commonly argued that identities and spaces are a product of recursive performances and have looked at the ways that power is produced through identity, representations and space (England and Lawson 2005). This study is about the relationship between gendered bodies and the spaces of a group of worker's recycling cooperatives in the ABC region of São Paulo, Brazil. More specifically this study looks at the progress that is taking place within these spaces towards deconstructing the meaning attached to the categories of male and female and the power configurations entwined with these categories.

This section poses the question, in what ways has the recycling cooperative served as a space of empowerment? In this study I draw from O'Brien and Whitmore's (1989) definition of empowerment. This definition permits the investigation to be broken into three scales of analysis: (1) power to inspire personal change, (2) power to inspire social change and (3) power to influence change over institutions that affect their lives. By using these three categories I suggest that the space of the cooperative allows individuals who have traditionally lacked access to power the opportunity to inspire change in their lives. Also, due to the fact that the recycling cooperative is a labour-based sphere that neither fits neatly into the category of male or female, in this study I draw on the concept of liminal space to illustrate the uniqueness of this culturally inscribed

landscape. Through the use of this term I demonstrate the way in which perceptions of gender roles - and the access to power that accompany these roles - are re-imagined.

2.2 Sentiments of Equity within the Cooperative

Identity and discourse in many cases intersect and shape social meaning within organizational contexts, while also being indicative of the way that lived experiences are constructed and interpreted (Strier 2010). Within the spaces of the recycling cooperative individualistic values are re-inscribed and communicated through discourses that express a dedication to achieving equity and justice through inclusion, solidarity and equity. Having found these sentiments to be so pervasive and such an important part of the cooperative recycler's identity, I suggest that these common values offer an important foundation for and help to explain the proliferation of female empowerment within the cooperatives.

Many different aspects of the cooperative reflect this communal sense of solidarity and commitment to equity. The organizational structure of the cooperative follows open democratic decision-making processes among and within the cooperatives. In everyday work situations, in home life and during organized regional and national recycler's gatherings this communal sense of solidarity was expressed both verbally and symbolically. Data collected from the field clearly communicates and supports the assumption that many members of the cooperative hold a strong commitment to equity and unity. The participatory diagramming exercise in particular has most clearly communicated these sentiments. The participatory diagramming activity was conducted at the beginning of each focus group and participants were asked to draw on paper their solutions to gender-based problems in their lives and within the cooperatives. This

activity produced fascinating results and clearly communicated an embodiment of specific values within the cooperative.

While there were many drawings that expressed the general theme of unity, solidarity and equity, a few drawings in particular more directly communicated these sentiments. A majority of the drawings included a sketch that depicted a solution to gender based problems in the cooperative and were accompanied by a statement or narrative. One male cooperative member's drawing depicted a male and a female standing outside of a building commenting "let's not bring our problems to the workplace" "let's work together and be more united" (figure 2-1). In this picture not only is it communicated that a collective effort is required to solve issues that arise within the cooperative, but also this was a solution that included both men and women.



Figure 2-1. A participants drawing of solutions to gender-based problems within the cooperative 'Let's not bring our problems to the workplace' 'Let's work together and be united'

Among the drawings, one symbolic theme in particular recurred. Many of the sketches portrayed a group of individuals unified to solve the cooperative's problem in an

equitable way. One drawing specifically portrayed a heterogeneous collective of male and female individuals with the caption reading “unity creates strength, be more united be more just” (figure 2-2). In addition, many of the drawings not only showed a unified group, but portrayed individuals unified symbolically by linking hands. One drawing portrayed seven stick figures linking arms with the heading “unity creates a difference - a power” (figure 2-3), communicating this participant’s sentiments that within the cooperative a collective effort is required in order to effectively solve problems.



Figure 2-2. A drawing from a male cooperative member from the Rafazendo cooperative. This research participant’s drawing depicts their proposed solution to gender-based problems in the cooperative. “*Unido faz força. Te mais unido para sera justo*” (Unity creates strength, be more united be more just)

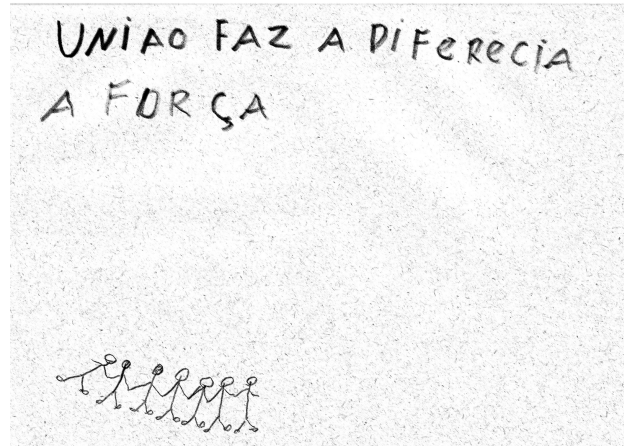


Figure 2-3. Research participant from Rafazendo cooperative's depiction of solutions to gender-based problems within the cooperative. "Uniao faz a diferenca - A forza" (Unity creates a difference - strength)

Results from the questionnaire survey gleaned similar results. One question in particular communicated a collective commitment towards achieving gender equity. The question asked participants if they felt that investing time in a gender study within the cooperative was important. Of the 52 individuals who answered the question, 18 participants responded, "I strongly agree", 32 responded "I agree" and one individual responded, "I neither agree or disagree". Most surprisingly only one individual disagreed that a gender study within the cooperative was important. These responses communicated a dedicated belief by nearly all participants that inequity, specifically gender inequity, was a worthy issue to invest time into eliminating within the cooperative.

2.3 Institutional Influences

Although it may be impossible to fully map out and trace the complete genesis and inspiration for the set of values highlighted above, two social institutions have had a significant impact in shaping these unified sentiments, the solidarity economy and the Movimento Nacional de Catadores dos Materiais Recicláveis / National Movement of

Collectors of Recycled Materials (MNCR). These social institutions both hold significance within Brazil and are dedicated to alleviating social inequality and promoting values of unity among their members.

2.3.1 The solidarity economy and the cooperative movement

The solidarity economy, characterized as a global movement, is both an approach and a general set of organizational strategies aimed at addressing oppressive capitalist social relations by creating democratized economies (Allard Davidson & Matthaei 2007). The solidarity economy consists of organizations and economic activities that embody progressive social values (Allard Davidson & Matthaei 2007) and is fundamentally built on collective social relations and the “cultivation of collective goods” (Gutberlet 2009: 740). The solidarity economy encompasses a wide spectrum of organizations and initiatives including fair trade, ethical purchasing, local exchange trading systems and cooperatives. Latin America has one of the oldest and most vibrant solidarity economy movements. It that originally took shape to provide socially excluded and vulnerable members of society work and basic social needs (Allard Davidson & Matthaei 2007).

The workers’ cooperative is an organizational structure that falls within the broader category of solidarity economy. Workers’ cooperatives define membership through the workers and often embody common institutional principles like employment, education, empowerment and democratic governance (McPherson 2010) and among the recycling cooperatives involved with this study, participatory and democratic governance are highly valued. Each of the cooperatives that participated in this study are owned and controlled by worker-owners and leadership is decided through democratic vote. Within

the recycling cooperative, remuneration is equal for each member, each member has equal ownership and there are no outside owners or shareholders.

Suggested as an alternative to capitalism, the global cooperative and solidarity economy movements have been touted as having the potential to create a more equitable, just and humane future (Restakis 2010; Allard Davidson & Matthaei 2007). The cooperative model as an organizational structure is based on the basic principles and values of community building, equity and people before profits (McPherson 2010). For McPherson (2010) being a member of a cooperative is in many ways a social act that blends economic activities with significant social goals and needs. The cooperative movement has over 800 million members in 85 countries, a deep history connecting economics to social values and is arguably the most powerful grassroots movement in the world (Restakis 2010).

2.3.2 Movimento Nacional de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis

The Movimento Nacional de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis / National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Materials (MNCR) is a nationally formed social movement, that has organized and demonstrated support for waste collectors in Brazil since 1999 (MNCR 2008; Gutberlet 2008). The goal of the MNCR is to provide the leadership for collectors to organize themselves into an “independent and efficient service sector” (Gutberlet 2008: 7). The movement is guided by the key principles of self-management, offering the waste worker direct democracy and inclusive decision making, the power to collectively control the means of production and spaces for unified respectful sharing of ideas and debate (MNCR 2008). MNCR emerged as an attempt to address negative stigmatization, exclusion, poverty and other forms of systematic

disempowerment brought upon individuals working within this sector (MNCR 2008; Gutberlet 2008). Support from the cooperatives for the MNCR movement is recognized through such rituals as wearing of the MNCR hats and t-shirts through day-to-day life and flag waving and chanting during recycler's conferences.

Because of these characteristics central to the global cooperative and MNCR movement, I suggest that these social institutions have a significant part in shaping the unique socio-spatial context of the cooperative and have created a space for a common identity. The institutions' key values, organizational principles and governance guidelines offer a foundation for sentiments of equity and solidarity to propagate, providing a foundation for female empowerment to take place within the cooperative.



Figure 2-4. Recyclers demonstrating support the MNCR movement, while also embodying the movement itself at the Festival of Citizenship and Waste in Belo Horizonte 2009.

2.4 Observing empowerment within the cooperative

This section explores the ways in which empowerment, specifically female empowerment, is fostered within the cooperatives. Social change that takes place within the cooperatives can be effectively expressed through the use of the term - however it needs to be used with care (Tremblay & Gutberlet 2010). Due to the criticisms that have surrounded the term in the past, it is important to outline some of the limitations attached to the term and clearly discuss how the concept will be used within the study.

2.4.1 Working with the term empowerment

“If words make worlds, struggles over meaning are not just about semantics: they gain a very real material dimension” (Cornwall & Brock: 1056).

Due to the broad and intellectually careless fashion with which the term empowerment has been used in the past, this development buzzword has been commonly problematised by critical development theorists (e.g. Syed 2010; Eyben & Napier Moore 2009; Cornwall 2007; Cornwall & Brock 2005; Sharpe et al. 2003). In particular, two aspects of the concept of empowerment are troubling. First, the term often negatively and by default, assumes that marginalized individuals are powerless. Eyben and Napier Moore (2009: 291) observe that “the Achilles heel of empowerment is that it implies that you don’t have power. Subordination is built in” (O’Brien & Whitmore 1989: 309). In development discourse the term often portrays the women from the global south as powerless and victims of cultural control, contributing to the idea of the “emancipated Western woman as the goal for all” (Sharpe 2003: 283).

If words are a product of the way individuals and groups envision the processes of development, then it is fair to assume that the we discursive perspectives related to

empowerment have the potential to create material realities (Cornwall & Brock 2005). In this study I resolve this challenge often built into the concept of empowerment by recognizing that nobody is without some amount of power, just as all individuals face some amount of subordination.

Second, empowerment is often not recognized for the intrinsic value it brings to the lives of those empowered. Many decisions to support empowerment focus on women as a means to an end goal and not an end in itself. A wide range of development perspectives view the support for women's empowerment as an economically sound strategy. For example, the World Bank's catchy development and female empowerment slogan: "women's empowerment and/or gender equality as smart economics. Who wants to be labeled 'stupid' for not supporting it?" (Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009, 293). Here empowerment is framed in a way that suggests not supporting the cause might be a bad decision for those (largely men, largely white) in power.

Perversely in this case, empowering 'marginalized' women is paradoxically viewed as a strategy for those in power to employ more power by avoiding 'stupid' business decisions thus distorting the concept's meaning – by not valuing things that aren't economically measurable and valuing things that perversely do not contribute to empowerment. Consider the relationship between women's role in the 'productive' capitalist work force and domestic roles as an example. Although this role in the capitalist workforce is often a measure of empowerment, in many cases this has meant a double burden for women who still hold responsibilities for domestic duties following a workday (Sharpe et al. 2003). In this way empowerment is a subjective term and what is

measured as “empowerment” from a development perspective might, in fact, exist as compounded oppression.

Despite my discomfort with the term, empowerment is an important and useful concept for this study as it offers a framework to discuss power in the lives of women. Since empowerment is about individuals having access to the tools to engage with power configurations that limit access to power in their lives, the study explores the way that female cooperative members recognize and are offered the tools to negotiate repressive power relations. While this study employs the use of this term, I remain conscious that the lens of empowerment has been traditionally premised on the idea of how gender ‘ought to be’ commonly designated by those who hold power in the research process (Syed 2010).

2.4.2 How the term empowerment will be used in this study

This study employs O’Brien and Whitmore’s (1989) definition of empowerment to help organize the discussion and frame the way that individuals experience empowerment within the cooperative. O’Brien and Whitmore (1989: 309) understand empowerment as: “an interactive process through which less powerful people experience personal and social change, enabling them to achieve influence over organizations and institution which affect their lives and communities in which they live”. While mindful of the fact that this definition negatively frames empowerment as being reserved for the ‘less powerful’, this study proceeds and comes to terms with this limitation by focusing on the three categories outlined in his definition. The following analysis of empowerment will be divided into the following categories drawn from O’Brien and Whitmore’s (1989) definition: (1) power to affect personal change; (2) power to inspire social change and (3)

power to achieve influence within communities, organizations and institutions that affect one's life. This categorization will allow a multi-scalar approach towards exploring the way that empowerment operates in the lives of the cooperative recyclers. Starting from the local/personal level, then moving to the social/community level and finally exploring wider national/institutional level. Although in many ways these categories are overlapping and inseparable, they act as a tool to organize and assist in conceptualizing the nature in which empowerment is discussed within this study.

2.5 Power to effect personal change

Feminist researchers have often highlighted the many ways in which work is constructed as male or female (England and Lawson 2005). In Brazil a distinct binary exists which designates suitable roles to fill for each gender. Men generally occupy labour based jobs, mechanized agriculture, modern and traditional manufacturing, mechanization and construction. For women labour is generally characterized by paid domestic employment, service sector work and childcare (Bruschini 2007). Uneducated women are confined to a small sector of service work, most commonly paid domestic labour.

One of the greatest strengths of the cooperative is the way in which it upsets this binary and represents a unique space that in many ways escapes essentialist classifications of what genders belong in which sector. The recycling cooperative can be generally typified as a space of manual labour and is a sector that offers membership, opportunities for leadership and administrative positions indiscriminate of race, class, or gender. Since the recycling cooperative is very much a labour-based job that neither fits clearly into male or female spheres, this space destabilizes male/female work spheres

binary and expands the nature of work that is perceived to be common for women to fill in Brazil.

To further understand the way this unique space offers empowerment through redefining male/female labour binaries, this study draws on the concept of gender liminality. The study claims that the recycling cooperative is a liminal workspace and uses the concept as a theoretical tool to understand the role this workspace plays in reimagining ways of understanding dyadic work spheres.

Developed through the work of Victor Turner, liminal spaces describe physical, social and ideological “moments of discontinuity” in the “social fabric” of a specific context (Shields 1991: 83; Freidus & Romero-Daza 2009). Having the roots from the Latin word *limen*, or threshold, liminality represents a space in which normative ideas are reinscribed and individuals are separated from familiar space ‘betwixt and between’ and neither ‘in’ or ‘out’ (Sweeney 2009; Shields 2003). Often the term liminality is used when a group of individuals are in a transition from one culturally defined stage to another and often this social transition is socially attractive and associated with personal transformation (Shields 1991) The concept of liminality allows one to imagine a transition or extension of an individual or group of individuals from one social status into the birth of another (Shields 2003).

Much like the spaces of the cooperative, liminal spaces are often associated with social movements and moments of discontinuity of an existing social fabric (Winchester et al. 2003; Shields 1991). The strength of this concept for this study comes from the fact that liminal spaces, like the recycling cooperative, are non-permanent spaces of social transformation. Allowing one to imagine and recognize the ways that the recycling

cooperative offers personal opportunities for women to work outside of the domestic, service and homecare spheres. Spaces such as the recycling cooperative offer a moment in which the weight of common social regulations are lifted and reshaped, effectively reflecting the transformative and adaptive powers of a culture (Shields 2003).

Among the research participants there was a general consensus that this type of work was more valued and offered women more personal dignity than other jobs typically filled by women. Many women expressed a preference for working in the cooperative over paid domestic labour because of the sense of equity and autonomy offered from working with the cooperative.

As one researched participant stated,

I worked in domestic service and I think this is much better. You never have anyone telling you what to do, each person here knows their responsibility. When I was a domestic service worker I had to wash the panties of others (Discussion group, May 2009).

The cooperative offers female members autonomy and an alternative to the disempowering hierarchal and punitive work environments. Women expressed a personal pride and optimism toward their work despite the fact that this occupation can be trying due to low paying, unstable salaries and precarious work conditions. As one female member noted, “we are in the dark, we don’t know what will be [the result], but we have hope that we will be rewarded” (Discussion group, May 2009).

2.7.1 Personal Pride

Cooperative recyclers find personal pride from working within the recycling cooperative. Despite the challenges that come along with the profession, cooperative members remain dedicated to their occupation and express a sense of pride for their work. Working in the same sphere as men was expressed to be an important source of

pride for some women, "...[women] think that they are strong, but not as strong as men, but we do the work of men" (Discussion group, December 2009).

While on the one hand, this statement negatively frames women as weak in relation to men, on the other hand, this statement communicates a sense of empowerment gained from the opportunity to do the same work as men in the same sector. Because of the asymmetrical way that labour, power and gender co-exist for men and women in most work spaces, the cooperative is a space where pride is fostered and gendered stereotypes attached to work positions are abated. This participant supports this claim and affirms her pride for her membership in the recycling cooperative by stating, "I am proud that my child works as a recycler. It is a profession like no other"

2.6 Power to inspire social change

In recent years cooperatives have become increasingly recognized as a transformative space that effectively inspires positive social change among and beyond the cooperatives. The cooperative has played a salient role in contributing to a national movement that has effectively offered a voice in formal and informal political spheres to those who have traditionally lacked a voice and reduced negative stigma attached to the profession. The cooperatives also pride themselves in promoting environmental education within their communities and offer social security to its members through strong social networks.

2.6.1 Shifting common perceptions of waste workers

Society doesn't see [recycling] as a dignified, honorable profession. Our society wants you to be a teacher, a bricklayer. A bricklayer is well accepted (Discussion group, December 2009).

When you work with waste there is [social] exclusion. The people that we talk to about the environment, we show the value of separating these materials. Those we have a daily relation with treat us with a lot of respect, a lot of caring... but the society in general doesn't see it this way, they are not educated to think about the environment, about our chemical dependency. Society prefers to keep a safe

distance from it, if I don't see it, I don't suffer, so I don't know. They ignore it, they prefer ignoring. In general society sees us from a distance and with a lot of prejudice, a lot (Discussion group, December 2009).

These are the words of cooperative members expressing sentiments of being undervalued and being an outcast, both arising from a lack of acceptance by the mainstream. Despite the great environmental and social services individuals working within the informal waste management sector offer Brazilian society, waste workers remain among the most negatively stigmatized groups of individuals in Brazilian society (Gutberlet 2008).

Although informal recycling is commonly viewed negatively and often recyclers feel some level of shame because of their career choice, a social movement has begun to reverse this negative stigma attached to this profession. In recent waste management literature cooperative recycling has been identified as an effective strategy to reduce urban poverty (Gutberlet 2010, 2009, 2008; Medina 2005). In low-income areas of São Paulo where basic public services are not otherwise provided, cooperative recyclers have had a significant impact in transforming the urban environment by collecting and adding value to what otherwise exists as environmental contamination (Gutberlet & Hunter 2008). Although it is well known that cooperative recycling provides many benefits to the city (employment creation; street cleaning; door-to-door collection; and environmental education), it is common for government to see this sector as a social problem, deny support and exclude recyclers from larger discussions of environmental management (Gutberlet 2008).

As a response to the way that their role is negatively viewed by society, the recycling cooperatives have engaged in the project of bringing pride and dignity to those working in the waste management sector. This promotion has become very much a political act that has had positive effects for those working with recyclable materials throughout Brazil. This counter movement is dedicated to fostering a commitment to communicating the social benefits that are provided by their work.

As a result of this counter movement gain more respect and dignity for this profession, in the last 10 years some significant progress has been made towards the recognition of the informal recyclers and cooperative recycling as a legitimate profession. At the municipal and federal level, policies have been implemented that recognizes the important role of catadores, supports their efforts, and has led to meaningful partnerships and support within the sector (Dias 2009).

For cooperative recyclers self-awareness of their value in society is an important precondition to shifting social perceptions and the raising of awareness of their social importance. Due to the collective support and iterative self-affirmation of the importance of their work, most informal recyclers believe that although the cooperative does not pay well and there is a lot of negative stigma attached to it, a lot of honor and dignity is earned by dedicating their life to this work. During my field research I observed this collective pride and feel that having the confidence to share this message to the public is critical component of the recyclers' identity. This collective recognition of the dignity and pride that can be found in this profession is, as one member noted, "ending preconceptions that we are scavengers. We are catadores [collectors]! We have a name

and we are recognized. We are entrepreneurs!” In a similar vein another member commented:

Before individuals were in the cooperative, they had no value, they were treated like garbage, as people without teeth, drunks. Since they joined the cooperative they have had their own collective space. This is our space and we are very proud of it (Discussion group, December 2009).

Cooperative members within the movement are offered the opportunity to generally inspire social change by reducing negative stigma attached to those working with waste and through a collective consciousness of being part of a larger movement. Beyond the leaders of the cooperatives, each individual contributes to this social movement by showing solidarity at recycler gatherings. This collective involvement is effective in building personal and group self esteem and the feeling of strength and power.

2.6.2 Social networks

Social networks established through daily encounters with friends, family and community members are an important feature of social life for humans (Fisher 1977). Social networks are established through daily routine and assist individuals in negotiating the social world (Molina, 2000; Rowe & Walch, 1990). In the case of the recycling cooperative, social networks have helped to fortify community ties and enhance the social positions of many women.

Women in the cooperative spoke of the time spent building the trust and social support of other women of the cooperatives. One discussion in particular illustrated the importance of the cooperative for building solidarity among women recyclers:

Participant 1: The space of the cooperative has a social function. Women have a good routine of spending time together. Sometimes at home they feel alone.

Participant 2: Because the relationship is so close between [the women], on the weekend and during the holidays it is common for them to come by the cooperative to socialize with their friends. It serves as a refuge for women when the situation at home is heavy (Discussion group, December 2009).

Beyond this, actual solutions and support for personal problems are offered to those in need by cooperative members, as one cooperative leader noticed:

In the same way there are disagreements, there is also a lot of help, for example when someone is sick everybody helps this person, asking if they are better, praying for them, offering money for them if they need to buy medicine (Discussion group, December 2009).

While social bonds are strong within the cooperative, this networking extends beyond the cooperative into the communities where they work.

Participant 1: Yes we stop to talk when we do a collection... she tells us to come in and she makes coffee. There is fresh bread. And when we arrive we go in and she says "come in come in". She is already waiting for us. "You can feel free to use the bathroom", filtered bottled water all ready for us and the men go in also.

Facilitator: Oh this is a very interesting point.

Participant 2: We actually go in and out of the house of the people.

Participant 3: Day to day we always go. It's always the same people doing the 'coleta'.

Participant 1: They are very trusting of us and we never betray their trust (Discussion group, December 2009).

Here we can see how the activities of the collectors extend beyond their specific work duties, into the surrounding communities – strengthening local ties and contributing to the happiness of the people they come in contact with.

2.6.3 Environmental Education

Networks are also fortified through efforts to spread and promote environmental education. An important mandate of the cooperatives is to enhance the well being of the local communities through public education regarding environmental issues that affect the communities, well beyond waste management. This education is conducted in many cases informally through discussions that take place during the collection and in more formal contexts like brochures, educational gatherings, photography and film.

2.7 Power to achieve change over institutions

“In the case of the leaders, they recognize that they are social activists participating in a larger social movement, the Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis” (Discussion group, May 2009)

Among the cooperatives individuals have the opportunity to shape institutions that are associated with the cooperative. Members of the cooperative have an opportunity to run as the leader of their cooperative, attend regional and national cooperative meetings and have their voice heard regarding concerns within the cooperative. Although each individual has a voice within the cooperative, the leader has the largest opportunity to directly influence and even change the public policies that shape institutions related to the cooperatives. Cooperative leaders serve as representatives for their cooperative, attend MNCR meetings, represent their cooperative at local, national and regional recycling gatherings and may be asked to participate in municipal meetings to share their experience and offer consultation regarding municipal waste management.

Within the cooperative, like all other spaces, leadership roles exist within a context that is gendered (Yoder 2001). The leadership structures of the cooperative are represents a way that the institution is uniquely gendered and serves as a space for empowerment. Among the group of cooperatives involved with this study, the majority was lead by women. In fact, during the fall of 2009 women filled leadership positions in six of the nine cooperatives involved with this study. Due to the hyper-masculine nature of Brazil and the low representation of women in most formal political spheres, this detail stands as a remarkable example of the gender equity that exists within the cooperative.

The cooperative leader has an important role in directing the way in which the cooperatives collaborate and communicate with each other. Among the cooperatives, the democratically elected leaders hold a significant amount of responsibility and play an important role in serving as a representative for discussions and decisions that take place among the cooperatives. Despite the leader holding a large responsibility without increased remuneration for their role, many research participants expressed that the leadership position is highly venerated and much sought after within the cooperative.

In an attempt to explain this high proportion of female leadership in the cooperatives research, I created some interview questions to tease out explanations for this interesting phenomenon. Many of the interviewees that were asked these questions provided explanations that women are more caring, have more patience, have a capacity to take on larger responsibility and are overall more dedicated to the cooperative. While these explanations may or may not hold partial truth, I recognize them to be essentialist since they generalize and attach universal values to a diverse group of women. Through careful consideration of research experiences with the cooperatives, I put forward that the leaders were simply chosen by the rest of the members based on who had the best leadership qualities and who demonstrated having the strongest qualities to serve the position the best. In this particular instance it appears that the individuals determined to be the best suited for these positions were predominantly women.

It is important to keep in mind that although values of equity are re-imagined within the cooperative, leadership roles do not exist within a genderless vacuum. Their roles are inextricably enmeshed with their own and members' awareness that they are women and the values they attach to this social category (Yoder 2001). However, given

the discursively established sentiments of equity and solidarity within the cooperatives and the ability of the members to see beyond the stereotypes attached to social categories, this study offers this as an explanation that may partially account for this strong representation of women in leadership positions.

This phenomenon of women as leaders has taken place in a mainstream social context that still considers women as less suited for leadership. This unique social context serves to disrupt the status quo and holds the potential to significantly shape the conventional idea of which individuals are best fit to serve as institutional leaders - offering women the power to serve in a position that allows them to affect institutions that are central to their lives.

Although stereotypical baggage, gender roles and hyper-patriarchal notions still exist within the cooperative. The existence of a space where women have the opportunity to serve in a highly respected position is a transformative act and reflects the deconstruction of gender difference within the cooperatives. In Brazil, like other countries characterized by significantly depressed socio-economic regions, women's lack of voice within political, community and market spaces deepens their subordinate position (Hoare and Gell 2009). Therefore, involving women in decision-making and agenda-setting processes and position to lead these processes offers the opportunity to enhance their lives, while also influencing the institutions that shape their lives (Hoare and Gell 2009).

2.8 Conclusion

We live in an era when community does not feel like community, common values are constantly being redefined and causes and solutions to social, political and

environmental issues are seemingly more complicated than ever. Because of this unique epoch, focusing on a space where understandings of gendered difference and equity are re-imagined is not only fascinating, but also important. This study has examined the role of the cooperative in deconstructing the meaning attached to the categories of male and female and the power configurations entwined with these categories. By bringing analysis and critical discussions of empowerment to the fore, this study has suggested that the way identity is shaped in relation to gender within the cooperative is discordant with the rest of Brazilian society. More specifically in this section I have argued that the recycling cooperatives involved with this study are unique spaces where individuals who have traditionally lacked access to power are granted the opportunities for empowerment.

To be sure, the recycling cooperatives involved with this study are not spaces that completely escape the power asymmetries characteristic of mainstream society. Like all social spaces, the recycling cooperative exists with complex and contradictory meaning. On the one hand, the recycling cooperative redefines the common gender ideologies that define which gender is allocated the most power and is best suited to fill certain occupational roles, while on the other hand, the cooperatives still conform to many hierarchal patterns of gendered work roles. By focussing on a space of empowerment, that exist within a hyper-masculine society, one can see how moments of empowerment can be weaved amidst and work concurrently with heteropatriarchal hegemony. McDowell (1999) brings to our attention that hetero-patriarchal ways of being are so naturalized that an epistemological reconstruction is necessary to overcome discourse and ideology woven into social fabric of institutions and organizational structures like the cooperative. This being said, while the cooperative as an institution does not achieve

complete gender parity, because of the pervasiveness of this particular hegemony, this does not suggest that its attainment are not laudable and worthy of recognition. By focusing on and highlighting the ways in which this novel organizational space promotes empowerment, this study seeks to further destabilize gender binaries and gendered asymmetrical power relations.

3. “It’s ugly, he does the house work instead of the wife”: exploring hegemonic masculinity among cooperative recyclers

3.1 Abstract

This paper is about performed social relations, specifically the role of hegemonic masculinity in shaping gendered space. Drawing from qualitative research data, this study deconstructs socially produced power asymmetries that exist within the lives of women and men employed by a small group of recycling cooperatives in the ABC region of São Paulo. First, I explore the concepts of performativity and hegemonic masculinity and suggest a mutually complementary relationship for understanding gendered space. Second, by drawing on research experiences and qualitative data, I spatially examine the most salient aspects of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of the female cooperative recyclers. Here I pose the question: how is masculine domination understood, interpreted and (re)produced by both women and men of the recycling cooperatives? Third, I suggest that masculine domination is not only established by men, which oppresses women, but masculine hegemonies can also be created by women. I affirm this notion by exploring the ways in which hegemonic masculinity and social roles, abilities and inabilities are discursively (re)produced by female cooperative recyclers.

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity, masculine domination, patriarchy, gender performativity, cooperative recycling, Brazil.

3.2 Introduction

Being included, as man or woman, in the object that we are trying to comprehend, we have embodied the historical structures of masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation. When we try to understand masculine domination we are therefore likely to resort to modes of thought that are the product of domination (Bourdieu 2001: 5).

This paper is about performed⁶ social relations, specifically the role of hegemonic masculinity in shaping gendered space. Drawing from qualitative research experiences, this study deconstructs socially produced power asymmetries that exist among female cooperative recyclers in the ABC region of São Paulo, Brazil. I use the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a lens to analyze the marginalized situations of women working within recycling cooperatives. I argue that focusing on and revealing the embeddedness and obscurity of the existence and performance of hegemonic masculinity is an important component of understanding the subaltern position of women.

3.3 Research questions and objectives

In this section the concept of hegemonic masculinity help to imagine the ways in which domination can occur with little if any coercive force. My personal exploration of masculine domination during my time in Brazil has proven to be an inspirational point of

⁶ In this section when using the term performance I am referring to Butler's concept of performative gender. Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity describes the reiterative manner in which acts, gestures, enactments (the performance) are socially fabricated and corporally sustained through discursive means. According to Butler, the iterative process, created through a regulated and constrained fashion over time, is of the utmost importance in creating the perception of a natural gender order and gendered cultural norms. She emphasizes that iterative performance is never a singular act but a "ritualized production" under the threat of taboo, ostracism or even physical harm (Butler 1990: 95). According to Butler, the social pattern of gender exists as a very secure social structure formed through imitative and contingent processes inscribed onto the body (Butler 1990). This reiteration is not only symbolic but a very physical process, therefore the stylized configurations of the body congeals to the point of appearing to own an essence of a 'natural' man or woman (Butler 1990). Butler's performativity offers a comprehensive explanation of social processes that both shapes gendered space and obscures power asymmetries, domination and social difference that exist among men and women.

departure for me to further explore the existence masculinity among the lives of cooperative recyclers in São Paulo. Since it is common for social differences and asymmetrical power relations to be obscured and become banal features of day-to-day life, I often witnessed acts of social domination take place uncontested and in many cases observed masculine performance reproduced by women. Due to the embeddedness and banality of hegemonic masculinity, I believe that uncovering these obscured social relations will allow for a further understanding of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity shapes social relations.

In this section I seek to build on current understandings of hegemonic masculinity in three ways. First, I demonstrate the ways that hegemonic masculinity is performed⁷ and embedded through the lives of cooperative recyclers. Second, by moving beyond viewing hegemonic masculinity as something produced by men aiming to subordinate women, towards an understanding of hegemonic masculinity as a complex configuration of gender practice - (re)produced by both men and women, I hope to contribute to a re-shaping of the way in which hegemonic masculinity is understood. Three, I demonstrate how aspects of hegemonic masculinity are discursively produced through the finer aspects of social practice and weaved through the daily lives of cooperative recyclers. By focusing on these finer aspects of life, I will demonstrate how this discursive production exists in a complex manner whereby nobody simply benefits or falls victim.

With these objectives in mind, I begin exploring the performance of hegemonic masculinity by asking two important questions. What social processes exist that allow for

⁷ In this section Gender performativity enables one to better understand the processes that assist in forming hegemonic masculinity, while the concept of hegemonic masculinity explains the regulated and constrained fashion that shapes the performative processes.

oppressive behaviors to become socially acceptable and even at times an encouraged form of gender relations? How is the existence of hegemonic masculinity understood, interpreted, produced and reproduced by women of the recycling cooperatives?

In thinking about these questions, I begin exploring the pervasiveness of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity among the cooperative recyclers involved with this research. My hopes are that this study will contribute to moving beyond current dualistic views of hegemonic masculinity, as a system of social domination (re)produced by men with the aim to subordinate women. As an alternative, I suggest that the concept be understood as a complex configuration of gender practice, which is formed through the performed patriarchal embodiment of beliefs about how the world should operate, produced and reproduced by both women and men.

This study is organized in the following way. The first section introduces the topics of hegemonic masculinity and explores the social processes that produce gendered space. The next section is an exploration of gendered space. Here, I present what I have found to be the most salient features of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of the cooperative recyclers. The last section focuses on the way that hegemonic masculinity and masculine values and abilities are discursively produced and reproduced by women from the cooperatives.

3.4 Hegemonic Masculinity

Derived from Gramsci's concept of hegemony, hegemonic masculinity was integrated into masculine and gender theory literature in the 1980's (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). From the most basic level, hegemony is a complex set of claims about how dominant groups create, sustain and exercise control over the masses (Ley

2006; Connell 2005; Bocoock, 1986). Hegemony is not necessarily always achieved with intention and is generally only possible through the “willing acquiescence of citizens to accept subordinate status” and the acceptance of inequitable social, political and cultural practices (Ley 2006: 333). Hegemony is most likely to be established, both collectively and individually, if there is some correspondence between cultural ideals and institutional power (Connell 2005: 77).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is a concept used to describe the same process of social control, conflated with ideals and values of what it means to be an ‘ideal’ male (Connell 2005). According to the concept, this ideal design of what it is to be a ‘real man’ communicates what are acceptable values to hold, desirable ways to speak and dress and the ideal body shapes that are necessary to be accepted into masculine spaces and to be placed hierarchically in relation to what is ‘masculine’ (Bradley 2007; Butz and Berg 2002). Hegemonic masculinity is a fluid process always undergoing change, with current forms of hegemony evolving and new forms of masculinities replacing older forms (Connell 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell 1987). Furthermore, this representation of the ‘ideal man’ need not be understood as a common figure and although the representation of these figures are rarely met, idyllic representations (sports stars, actors, film characters) act to maintain this hegemonic order (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Although hegemonic masculinity is normative, ideal masculine representations are not. Only a small number of men embody the most venerated ways to be a man, while others seek to position themselves in relation to it, overall legitimizing the subordination of women to men (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

To be sure, the concept of hegemonic masculinity does not assume that other types of masculinities do not exist. In fact, a diverse set of subordinate masculinities like male homosexuality, less macho and heteronormative ethnicities and more effeminate types of heterosexual males are necessary in order to sustain the social institution and maintain its hierarchical order (Connell 1987; Kronsell 2006).

3.4.1 Furthering understandings of hegemonic masculinity?

From the mid-1980's to the early 2000s, the concept of hegemonic masculinity thus passed from a conceptual model with a fairly narrow empirical base to a widely used framework for research and debate about men and masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 835).

As demonstrated by this quote, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been most commonly used to understand masculinities by focusing on the subject position of men. Much less commonly academics have used the concept as a lens to focus on women's subordinate position and their role in (re)producing hegemonic masculinity. Specifically, R.W. Connell, an influential figure in developing the concept of hegemonic masculinity, has developed descriptions of the concept that have earned great significance in the field of masculine studies.

[Hegemonic masculinity is] the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees [...] the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell 2003: 77)

Although descriptions such as this by Connell still hold significance in establishing dichotomous understandings of masculinity, more recent work has come to recognize the multiple nature of masculinities (Connell 2002; 2005).

Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting. (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 836)

Additionally, while some masculine theorists have recognized that hegemonic masculinities can be constructed without corresponding to the lives of any actual men (Pacholok 2009; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Butz and Berg 2002; Brod 1987), most commonly the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been used to describe social and power relations among men and the resulting subordination of women. Although descriptions, such as the one mentioned previous, have been important in developing the concept of hegemonic masculinity and masculine studies, I suggest that there are limiting aspects to this traditional view when exploring feminine and masculine spaces. I would like to suggest a shift of focus with the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Since hegemonic masculinity is more than just a simple tool of analysis about the dominant position of men and masculinities, descriptions, such as these produce a dualistic way of viewing masculinities, in turn restricting and shaping perceptions of gendered space.

This study focuses on three aspects of hegemonic masculinity. First, because of the complexity, omnipresence and fluidity of this dominant social institution, the concept of hegemonic masculinity can be very useful and effective not only in helping to understand social domination, but it is also key in exploring the subaltern subject positionings of women. Second, hegemonic masculinity is not something solely produced by men that act to oppress women, but can also be (re) produced by women. Third, focusing on and revealing the embeddedness and obscurity of masculine social relations is an important component of understanding the subaltern position of women.

Of course, I do not assume that masculine theorists such as Connell would argue against the notion that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is more complex and fluid than has been commonly portrayed. Rather, I suggest that masculine research that mainly

focuses on women's subaltern positions is limited. Since hegemonic masculinity is a dominant feature in most societies and men have historically been the main figures in controlling the most highly valued hegemonic institutions (politics; military; corporate sector; trades sector; professional sports), it is not surprising that the attention put towards the concept has been largely focused on examining men.

By applying the concepts of hegemonic masculinity directly to the positions of women, I attempt to extend the understanding masculine domination as a product of men that aims to subordinate women toward viewing the concept as a complex configuration of a specific gender practice, produced and reproduced by all genders. Offering the capacity for one to imagine hegemonic masculine values embodied by both men and women.

3.6 Hegemonic masculinity: shaping gendered space

Hegemony shapes the way gender is performed *vis-à-vis* regulation of actions in the form of *prohibition and taboo* and performance iteratively shapes the ideals, values and cultural norms that inform and shape hegemonic masculinity (Butler 1990). Since masculine and feminine norms are defined and shaped by power relations that exist in material contexts (Datta 2008), revealing the spatially embedded and obscured performed patterns of hegemonic masculinity is important for understanding the subordinate position of female cooperative recyclers.

Since gender is a word used to describe everyday social practice and ordering of space (Connell 2005), focusing on physical spaces such as the home and the workplace is necessary for understanding the production of masculine and feminine identities (Datta 2008). Doreen Massey (1998) expresses the pervasive and deeply embedded nature of

gender throughout space, between cultures, classes, races and taking place over time. I would like to reaffirm Massey's (1998) sentiments that spaces and places in every aspect are thoroughly gendered. I would also like to further this notion by adding that hegemonic masculinity, in many cases, has a significant role in shaping gendered space.

Recycling cooperatives, like all spaces and places, have a distinct spatial order. Datta (2008: 191) confirms this notion by arguing that spaces are interpreted through "representative aspects" that communicate 'natural' hierarchies among bodies within the spaces they occupy. Within the recycling cooperatives there are distinct performed gender roles, discourses and rituals of space that help to configure these hierarchies. Spatial practices, everyday understandings of gendered space, demeanor and attire are just a few examples of the deep-seated indications of a gendered social order among cooperative recyclers. The following section will identify salient aspects of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of the cooperative recyclers, demonstrating how gendered social configurations and gendered space are shaped by hegemonic masculinity.

3.7 Recognizing hegemonic masculinities among cooperative recyclers

Machismo and *machista* (having machismo qualities) are terms commonly used in Brazil and throughout Latin America to describe heteronormative and hyper-masculine social relations in which men assert power over women and other men (McIlwaine 2010). During focus groups and interviews the term *machismo* was commonly used to communicate forms of hyper-masculine social posturing. Machismo is an important term that represents a set of gendered relations and a larger narrative of masculine domination.

Although machismo as a term does not directly evoke spatial meaning, in many ways it describes a particular spatial conduct. The open acceptance of machista posturing

represents who holds power in particular spaces and the type of conduct that is deemed acceptable. The acceptance of this oppressive behaviour by women and less-masculine men, with little effective resistance, represents the existence of masculine hegemonic circuits of power. The embodiment of this power can be seen in the way bodies are held (timidly; confidently; domineering) and how they interact, move and communicate.

Throughout my fieldwork I asked research participants to describe the term *machismo*. Participants often described: habitual drinking, demeaning language in reference to women, lurid suggestions of physical violence against women, control (both physical and psychological) over one's partner, flirting and fornication. During a discussion with the male recyclers about solutions for gender-based struggles, machismo and the existence of hegemonic masculinity was clear.

Group Facilitator: How can we resolve this problem?

Participant 1: Give them a smack (*da umas palmadas*).

Participant 2: I used to try to talk with my woman.

Participant 1: The woman cannot work, she must stay at home.

Participant 2: My wife works and it's a great help to pay our costs to sustain our house.

Participant 3: You have to customize your women how you want them to be. She must know how you like things, to give you what you want.

Group Facilitator: You don't need to know what your women wants and what she likes?

Participant 1: There is a certain conduct, a way of ruling for men.

Participant 4: If the woman doesn't do things as I want, I'll change my wife for another.

Participant 3: Yes, you need to know what she likes, but if it doesn't combine with what I like then I'll send her away. For example, if she buys small shorts and I don't like them she has two options: leave or stop wearing this type of clothing. (Group discussion, November 2009)

Narratives of control were common during the discussion group with men. This form of discourse was used as a tool to achieve a dominant masculine positioning and to assert their identity as men. Even while the term machismo denotes serious acts of masculine domination (as demonstrated above), in the day-to-day lives of the recyclers the reference to machismo was used in a very casual manner. Through discussions about relationships

between men and women in the cooperatives, it was common to hear women excuse socially embedded acts of masculinity by acknowledging and accepting that “this is the way Brazil is” (Interview, November 2009). Similarly, when asked to describe men another female participant commented, “Hmm...well men are very machista aren’t they?” (Interview, December 2009). Comments such as these belong to a daily narrative that reflects the existence of a noticeable hegemony among cooperative recyclers.

This casual reference to machismo that is evoked in daily conversation exemplifies masculine despotic values and reflects the banality of masculine domination in the lives of the cooperative recyclers. Oppressive and violent meaning that is attached to the term machismo is obscured and goes uncontested. To further understand this point, I refer to a quote by Judith Butler to explain how dominant and non-dominant gender identities and their associated meanings can become so deeply obscured:

[T]he ostensible copy is not explained through reference to an origin, but the origin is understood to be as performative as the copy. Through performativity, dominant and nondominant gender norms are equalized. But some of those performative accomplishments claim the place of nature or claim the place of symbolic necessity and they do this only by occluding the ways in which they are performatively established (Butler 2004: 209).

Here Butler details how processes that obscure the ‘natural’ social roles are a necessary precondition for the gender role’s claim of “symbolic necessity”. She also shows how disparities between asymmetrical practices, identities and privileges among dominant and non-dominant identities become apparently reduced and equalized. The differences between the norm (the origin) and the *ostensible copy* are equalized through iterative processes and become symbolically established as having a ‘natural’ necessity (Butler 2004). For those discursively framed as the ‘other,’ in many cases there is a resistance to opposing the status quo.

3.7.1 *Marianismo*

Marianismo is a concept that was first created by Stevens (1973) to understand the female role in relation to Machismo. Marianismo, a much less frequently used term, describes a set of beliefs about women's moral role in relation to men (Chant 2003; Wood & Price 1997; Bachrach 1991; Stevens 1973). Literature on Marianismo was created to offer a more complete understanding of machismo and in some cases has been used to explain why women accept abusive male behaviour (Bachrach 1991). Marianismo is used to understand women's roles and justify women's subordinate position in Latin America by claiming it to be part of a sacred order. Marianismo finds its inspiration from the worship of Mary and frames women as morally superior to men with an essence of semi-divinity and spiritual strength (Stevens). According to Stevens (1973: 63), "men's wickedness existing as a necessary precondition of women's superior status".

Like most gendered relations, the relationship between machismo and marianismo is a complex set of social relations with contradictory meaning. On the one hand, women are in an elevated position to that of men representing moral superiority and semi-divinity, while on the other hand, this same arrangement finds women in a subordinate role of violence and control. According to marianismo women's subaltern status is augmented by the fact that men's wickedness is a "necessary precondition" (Stevens 1973: 63) to women's divine elevated status, therefore making them exempt from their oppressive acts. This presumable natural order offers no incentive to treat women with respect and reinforces a hegemonic belief about gender roles. Although there is much respect granted for the role that women hold in their domestic and social reproductive roles, the women generally

accept a majority of the social reproductive and domestic responsibilities due to a belief in a 'natural' gender order.

3.8 Domestic social duties

Falling in line with this discussion of *machismo* and *marianismo*, the following discussion looks at how perceived social roles both reflect and reinforce masculine hegemonies. Much like was communicated by the concept marianismo, women's domestic duties, responsibilities and roles as 'social reproducers' have been viewed to give women a more elevated social status. It will be demonstrated in the following discussion that this elevated 'moral' social responsibility is a façade and can be understood as another form of hegemonic domination.

Like the work sphere, the domestic sphere has a distinct social order. Among the lives of the cooperative recycler's, a distinct order exists that delineates who bears certain responsibilities within domestic spaces. In both the discussion groups and interviews, participants communicated specific ways in which hegemonic values have shaped the division of domestic and social reproductive duties (Bui & Morash 2008).

Women go to work and [after] they have to do domestic duties, clean the floor, wash clothes, which men do not participate in, men do nothing in the home (Group discussion, November 2009).

This image of women being the sole bearers of domestic responsibility was a reoccurring theme throughout discussion groups and interviews and was further supported through survey results. When men and women were asked about what percentage of domestic and childcare duties they were responsible for in the home, on average women said to be responsible for 94.8 percent of domestic duties and 88.3

percent of childcare duties. Men on the other hand, said to be responsible for 45.5 percent of domestic duties and 47.2 percent of the childcare duties.

This indication of the women being the bearer of a majority of the domestic responsibilities was echoed throughout all discussion groups with the women. Women used the term “*dupla jornada*” or “double day’s work” (often with great discontent) to describe their situation of having to work full days at the cooperative and the home:

We work a lot and it is not recognized the importance that we have. We are not recognized even in our dreams. They are trying to organize our working schedule for between 8am to 3pm at the cooperative. This way we can clean our house at 3, then on Sunday we can be free to live our lives. (Discussion group, November 2009)

Although the accounts of the women’s lived experiences are very heterogeneous, the expression of feeling overworked and bearing a majority of the domestic and social re-productive responsibilities was a common thread. Often participants commented on feeling like “prisoners” of their own situation and feeling “kidnapped” by their duties, also expressing that they work “too much out of home, in the house and with childcare duties” (Group discussion, November 2009).

These social roles are telling of the deeply embedded values and beliefs regarding social roles that exist throughout Brazilian culture. In Carlos Ribeiro’s (2003) study “Gender Family and Work in Brazil”, Ribeiro demonstrates how extremely unbalanced domestic and childcare duties are throughout the nation. Ribeiro found that among heterosexual couples, 71.3 percent of women responded to always caring for their children and 25.7 percent responded to generally being responsible for caring for their children. This is contrasted with 4.2 percent of the men responding to always caring for the children and 8.5 percent of men responding to generally being responsible for caring for their children. Not surprisingly, Ribeiro drew similar results for domestic duties. 81.9

percent of women responded to always taking responsibility for domestic duties, 13.9 percent responded to being generally responsible for domestic duties and 2.3 percent of men responding always taking responsibility and 4.3 percent said they have generally taken responsibility for domestic duties. While this study is more than 7 years old and exceeds the class and regional limits of the cooperative participants, its strong results speak to the pervasiveness of the socio-spatially constructed domestic division of labour.

Domestic and reproductive duties (that have for the most part been designated as the responsibility of women) are socially and economically undervalued in mainstream society (Tickner 2006). While women's roles as reproducers, educators and domestic caregivers are important for maintaining the global capitalist economy, they remain undervalued socially and economically (Tickner 2006). Such culturally scripted versions of femininity in which women are supportive of yet subordinate to men, holding passive and nurturing characteristics supports and affirms hegemonic masculinity and is crucial to its existence (Bui & Morash, 2008).

3.8 Masculine social and spatial control

In the above analysis I have discussed *machismo*, *marianismo* and *dupla jornada* to help demonstrate the manner in which hegemonic norms become accepted into the lives of recyclers and are integrated into the daily discourse in an uncontested manner. I now continue my demonstration of the way that hegemonic masculinity operates among the lives of women cooperative recyclers by detailing more specific examples of overt masculine social and spatial control.

Physical domination of men over women is considered a direct indication of masculine domination (Kedir & Admasachew, 2010; Bui & Morash, 2008). In a similar

way, culturally and socially shaped ideas of what it means to be feminine and masculine are shown to reinforce asymmetrical power relations. This allows men greater social power and makes it possible to control and dominate women (Bui & Morash, 2008). During discussion groups many women shared experiences of domestic abuse and spatial restriction. One discussion in particular centered on a ‘girl’ in a local community who was known to some participants to be a victim of domestic violence:

Participant 1: It’s a little brown skinny girl. She gets beat up by her husband.

Participant 4: And nobody has reported this?

[Everybody agrees] no, no.

Participant 5: Which girl, aunty?

Participant 1: The one that lives at the back of Sandra’s home. A little one.

Participant 3: A brown one?

Participant 1: Yes

Participant 3: It must be the little one that walks around pushing a stroller with her kid.

Group facilitator: She is not able to talk to anyone, or go to the police station for women?

Participant 1: Everybody there knows he beats her. One of these days she arrived at home saying that he had hurt her. She didn’t have cooking gas. She didn’t have milk for her child.

Participant 3: Poor little one (Discussion group, December 2009)

Together with discussions such as this, results from my survey confirmed the existence of domestic violence in the lives of the cooperative recyclers. 28.5 percent of females surveyed responded to have been victims of domestic violence in the last year and 34.5 percent of both women and men responded that domestic violence is a common problem.

In many cases of domestic violence there was a strong relationship between spatial control and domination and abuse of the body:

...and me, my dear, I worked in the fields, together with my husband. When I was 38 there was the opening of the court house and a neighbour of mine told me that they were needing a cleaner... he didn’t let me. All sorts of jobs I got he didn’t let me go to. When I went there and talked to him about going to work he said “no you are not going to work among that many men”. I told him “this time I will go”. He beat me up, my darling. He gave me a beating. He hurt my foot, but that time I went. (Discussion group, December 2009)

In addition to the interplay between masculine control and the body, the home exists

as a paradoxical space. On the one hand, it represents a space of family, shelter, privacy and refuge from the outside world, while on the other hand, it simultaneously represents a violent space of control and entrapment. Similarly, another woman spoke of the home and domestic life as a space of which her husband dictated the terms of occupation.

When I first got married I was working. It was sharing... I had the first child, then I didn't go to work, he didn't let me. Then I had the second and then I had the third. Then I had the fourth, so he also didn't let me work...Then I took a test for the state and passed to be a helper in the school kitchen. He didn't let me work and I allowed him. I didn't go, I did the same for the municipality. I passed and he also didn't let me go and I didn't go. He said no you have the children to raise and you can't work outside the home. And I accepted. And if it were today I wouldn't accept this. (Group discussion, December 2009)

For another woman, the spatial restriction she experienced existed far beyond the verbal commands of her husband:

He would lock the windows with pieces of wood so I wouldn't get out. He would lock the gates with a pad lock. Then I would run away through the fence to go take my children to get vaccinated. (Group discussion, December 2010)

Such a chilling tale of spatial despotism and entrapment is a stark reminder of how matters of domestic violence extend far beyond the spaces of the body - and a palpable demonstration of the spatiality of hegemonic masculinity.

3.8.1 Women resisting hegemonic masculinity

In the preceding discussion I have demonstrated the most oppressive and pervasive forms of hegemonic masculinity within the lives of women cooperative recyclers. I have chosen these overt examples of masculine domination to show how examining the lives of women can be an effective context for exploring masculine hegemonies. Too be sure, I do not wish to suggest that women do not employ certain amounts of power and do not actively engage in forms of counter-hegemonic resistance.

In many cases I observed women actively resisting being portrayed as victims. As one woman commented, “in my house things get a bit violent but I hit back too” (Focus group discussion, November 2009). Since victims of domestic violence are often portrayed as passive and weak these strategies of resistance act to reshape identities and reject traditional gender representations among pervasive networks of hegemonic power (Boonzaier 2003).

In one case a group of women constructed a narrative of counter-hegemonic retaliation to deal with masculine domination:

Facilitator: What do you think? Let’s take the case such as this little girl who gets beat up. What would be the solutions to get out of this situation?

Participant 1: Beat the shit out of him

Participant 3: Beat him up ...

Facilitator: Who could beat him?

Participant 3: The women get together and hit him (Discussion group, December 2009).

As demonstrated with these excerpts, women are not without power to counter masculine domination. Although hegemonic masculinity is very pervasive, in many cases throughout my research women demonstrated that they are not simply passive victims of patriarchy.

3.10 Discursive reproduction of hegemonic masculinity

In the following discussion I continue to focus on the existence of hegemonic masculinity in the lives of women, while shifting the discussion towards women’s role in discursively (re)producing hegemonic masculinity in their daily lives. Since hegemonic masculinity is most commonly viewed by masculine theorists as something produced by men, aimed at subordinating women, I contribute to current discussion of hegemonic masculinity by showing the ways in which women hegemonic beliefs and (re)produce masculine paradigms.

In some cases, women's role in reproducing masculine discourse takes the form of showing disapproval for non-traditional roles. Before the beginning of each discussion group, we showed a short Brazilian film titled "Wake up Raimundo" (Acorda Raimundo) as a tool to stimulate discussion regarding gender norms in the lives of the cooperative recyclers. In the film the husband, Raimundo, awakes to a world in which the gendered roles in his life are completely reversed. In this alternate reality, Raimundo is responsible for childcare duties, prepares food for his family and is physically abused by his wife.

The film always stimulated interesting discussion. In one case a female participant expressed a complete disapproval for this reversal of roles.

Group facilitator: But what do you think of Raimundo in the movie? How do you perceive Raimundo considering he is a housewife?

Participant 1: He did sewing, cooked, washed clothes.

Participant 2: It's ugly, he does the housework instead of the wife. (Discussion group, December 2009)

Since most female participants at some point during the research process expressed feeling overburdened by both paid and domestic work, this participant's comment came as a surprise. For this participant, the suggestion of an atypical role configuration in the movie was considered 'ugly' as it disrupts the status quo. This participant, by internalized hegemonic masculine claims, was inclined to reject the notion of the man doing the housework, paradoxically reinforcing the same framework that acts to oppress her. In this way such discourses do not simply reflect dominant paradigms, they also shape, recreate and further concretize current beliefs (Fairclough 1992).

Perspectives from those in leadership positions can have a significant impact in shaping the perspectives of those being lead. It was common among the female leaders I interacted with and interviewed to represent and embody masculine characteristics and

values.

Interviewer: In your point of view, what are some problems that exist in the cooperative between women and men?

Cooperative leader: Between men and women? In reality, I don't think the problem is due to they are men or women. I think there is more problem with the human relationship with women. The men are more friendly with each other, this in the human relationships here in the cooperative, the women are more provocative, they are always talking behind the back of others, they are jealous. Normally women cause more problems in the cooperative than men, because they are "pickier" (Discussion group, December 2009)

Androcentric beliefs can be both produced and reproduced by men and women. As Bourdieu (2001: 24) posits "the masculine order also inscribes itself in bodies through the tacit injunctions that are implied in the routines of the division of labour". For Bourdieu one of the most impressive aspects of the androcentric order is that justification is an inherent component of its development. The hegemonic existence develops as "neutral" or the norm and has no need to spell itself out in discourse aimed at legitimating it" (Bourdieu 2001: 9).

Discourse is used to structure what individuals view as valid knowledge, through the seemingly banal and minute aspects of social practice - discourse shapes social relations (Gazso 2004). This narrative reflects the embodiment of masculine values that shapes her position as a leader and represents her complicity in reshaping perspectives among workspaces.

3.11.1 *The discursive: (re)producing material realities*

In the cooperative men are framed as the idyllic figure which all other values of quality, production and social values measure up against and often women are framed in relation to men's abilities. I observed that not only men reproduce *machista* behaviour and not only men shared the common views of women. Drawing from the discussion of cooperative leaders, women's inabilities are negatively framed against men's abilities.

Author: But can women in the cooperatives do all the activities?

Cooperative leader: Yes they can, it's physically exhausting but they do. They do the loading, they do separation of the material, they do environmental education, they do the collection really well. If there are men...um... how do you say? We do not use the women, they don't need to lift weight, but if there aren't men, women do the job in the same way... If I had a 200kg bale of recycled material, I would need 2 men to load this bale and I would need 4 women to do the same. The strength of women is less than the strength of men (Interview, December 2009).

In this case the leaders conformance to hegemonic beliefs about women and labour influences her decisions made about the roles that women are 'best suited' to fill. The female cooperative leader's belief about women's strength further reinforces beliefs about women's weakness by relegating them to roles that are not physical and where strength is not gained. Einspahr (2010: 7) refers to this contradictory relationship as a material-symbolic feedback loop in which "oppression works in part because the 'idea' of a groups inferiority produces and is produced by that groups inferiority". For example, in Mary Wollstonecraft's (1792) "The Vindications of the Rights of Women", Wollstonecraft drew attention to and problematized the fact women were not offered access to education because of their perceived irrationality. She argued that this 'irrationality' was a socially produced notion only reinforced due to the fact that women were not offered access to education. Thus, much like the female cooperative leader's perceptions of the lack of strength of women, women's perceived 'inferior nature' only acts to further reproduce women's subordination.

In another case during an interview with the same cooperative leader, she further elaborates her sentiments of women's inferiority and fragility.

Interviewer: Do you think men have this kind of strength because day to day they do this type of activity with more weight?

Cooperative leader: No. No, we recognize that the bone structure, the shape of the body of the man is tough, the tendons, the muscles. The structure of women are more fragile. The woman has this thing, a uterus. If she exerts a lot of force it can be dangerous for the uterus,

it can cause reproductive problems. So we try to avoid giving these tasks to woman and ask the men to do these jobs (Interview, December 2009).

Women generally fill the material separation role, a role that is valued the least and requires minimal amounts of strength, while the more highly valued technical positions that at times require more strength (material press operator; truck driver), are mainly filled by men. This participant's beliefs of who should occupy certain roles also dictate who fills the most important roles in the cooperative.

Interviewer: And truck drivers, are generally men.

Cooperative Leader: Women don't care to do this. They don't have the desire to drive the truck (Interview, December 2009).

While this participant assumes that women do not care to drive the trucks, in almost every case they responded with interest.

Interviewer: So you would not like to [drive the truck]?

Participant: I would like to do this but I have fear.

Interviewer: You have fear?

Participant: But I think that it's beautiful when women drive

Interviewer: U huh

Participant: I think it's great (Interview, December 2009).

This comment from a woman who is a member of the same cooperative as this leader, directly contradicts her assumptions about women and their interest in filling the role as truck driver. Much like this participant's assumptions about women's fragility, her assumptions about women's interest in driving a truck has implications for material reality:

But they [the women] never say "no" to this kind of job. They always say "we will do it, no problem". Psychologically even though their structure is fragile. But they say "why does a man do it and I don't?" So they say "bring more women here and we will lift it". (Interview, December 2009)

Although this cooperative leader recognizes that women are capable and willing to complete the same task as men, she again relies on her assumption about women's biological inferiority and psychological fragility to explain what roles are best for women

to fill.

Here the material-symbolic feedback is clear, because women are perceived as fragile, they are given less opportunity to do physical work, resulting in women becoming less capable to build the strength to do these tasks and men further develop their strength, skills and capacity to further excel at accomplishing these types of jobs. Discursively this cooperative leader's beliefs regarding women's inferiority as the leader further reinforces these same perceptions and determines which genders are most suitable to fill certain roles. Because men are considered to be biological stronger than women (whether this assumption holds completely truth or not) allows men to increase their strength and skills by filling the more physical demanding and technical positions - further reinforcing ideas of weakness and inferiority appended to the female body. Discourse and ideas about women's 'natural' or biological abilities and/or what women are or are not best suited at, in fact acts to physically reinforce these same beliefs.

3.13 Concluding thoughts

Through revealing the embeddedness and highlighting the performance of hegemonic masculinity, I have argued that, (1) using hegemonic masculinity is a valuable tool to further understandings of the subordinate role of women and (2) that exploring the subordinate position of women is useful in furthering current understandings of hegemonic masculinity.

By examining obvious manifestations of hegemonic masculinity in the cooperatives (domestic violence and spatial control, machismo and the domestic division of labour), I have attempted to demonstrate how looking at the position of women can offer a stronger understanding of how hegemonic masculinity operates as a fluid and

dynamic pattern of social domination. I have also endeavored to contribute to current ideas of hegemonic masculinity by suggesting that hegemonic masculinity is not an institution of domination that is produced by men and acts to oppress women, but women too have a significant role in producing and reproducing it.

The analysis of the discussion groups and interviews has suggested that overall women play a significant part in reproducing narratives that shape norms regarding women's abilities and inabilities and general perceptions of women's social roles. My intentions are not to place accountability on women for their subordinate roles as I understand gender relations to be much more complex than this. Rather, these roles are deeply embedded within the social fabric of daily life. I feel that women's roles in reproducing masculine narratives are more a reflection of the strength and pervasiveness of hegemonic forms of masculinity than the complicity of women.

By focusing on women's involvement in (re)producing hegemonic masculinity, this paper does not attempt to shift accountability toward women for their subordinate position, as this study recognizes the social processes which produce masculine domination to be much more complex than this. Rather, my intentions are to elucidate and contribute to the understanding of how hegemonic masculinity is performed and is manifested through space, in hopes of arriving at a clearer understanding of how social domination operates in society.

Just as I have no intentions of portraying women as helpless victims of patriarchy, I am also cautious of portraying men as ruthless perpetrators. Men, just like women, have heterogeneous identities and epistemologically speaking "are also prisoners and insidiously victims of the dominant representation" (Bourdieu 2001: 49).

Throughout this study I have suggest that in order to build on the current dualistic views of hegemonic masculinity we focus less on actual male and female bodies and shift our attention toward the performed masculine or feminine identities that are embodied and reproduced among social beings. I hope that this study contributes to an opening of space for us to imagine how discourse under culturally regulated frameworks has the potential for the recreation of new, less oppressive hegemonies.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Limitations: addressing the contradictory nature of the studies

At first glance it may appear that the arguments and ideas presented in section two and three contradict and oppose one another. In section two I claim that the cooperative fosters empowerment and promotes equity and unity, while in section three I highlight and detail the oppressive nature of hegemonic masculinity within the cooperative.

I do not consider this to be a flaw of my analytical approach. In fact, I consider it to be one of its strengths. This contradictory nature of the space of the cooperative is a representation of Koskela's (2005) concept of elastic space by the way in which gender relations in one particular gendered context can vary and contradict one another. "[G]ender relations in space vary also according to each particular context", just as there is no one single female experience across space, space is not performed, produced and experienced in a homogeneous manner (Koskela 2005: 261). Although the popular discourse within the cooperatives supports the notion of equity, among the cooperative members, in many ways patriarchal relations, domination of women and hegemonic masculinity still exists.

According to Lefebvre, when analyzing urban space "the most important thing is to multiply the readings of the city" (1996:159). Urban spaces exist of countless layers which offer the opportunity to (de)construct and interpret "stories which contradict and provide an antidote to normative discourses" (Nagel 2009: 327). Through this thesis I wish to suggest that space and all its complexities is multilayered and disarranged. Although linear understandings of space may be simpler for an academic analysis, often

space exists in a contradictory and uneven fashion with multiple hegemonies and counter hegemonies being weaved throughout.

4.2 Limitations

This thesis is both a physical manifestation and symbolic representation of my first major independent academic research project. The process was much different than I had anticipated and while the challenges are too numerous to recount, there are some limitations that have cultivated my passion, shaped my results and formed my critical perspective. Thus, they are worth mentioning here.

4.2.1 Methodological limitations

Initially during the proposal writing stage for this project I relied on participatory action research (PAR) methodology to guide my research process. PAR refers to a research methodology where participants join efforts of the researcher to collectively address problems faced by the group (Johnson et al. 2006). This methodology differs from traditional research as the researcher carries out the research *with* rather than *for* the group (Johnson et al. 2006). Upon arriving in Brazil to begin my research, I realized that I had idealized this research methodology. Being a master's research project, the scale of the project was not big enough to realistically conduct a project truly participatory in nature. Because of my limited time, mobility and language capabilities, I did not have the opportunity to form bonds of trust, integrate into the community and informally discuss and assess whether all individuals truly believed there were gender-based problems in their lives worthy of attention.

The saliency of post-colonial power relations within my research has proven to be the biggest limitation and point of personal unrest for my personal research approach. As

a Western researcher visiting a 'less developed' country conducting research aimed at 'helping' those in 'need', having my research partially funded by two Canadian development agencies, publishing the studies in colonial languages and preparing the research to be presented for privileged academics at North American academic conferences, smacks of academic exploitation and expropriation. Although I initially attempted to form my methodology to be 'grassroots' and seeking to 'empower' research participants, in many ways my research is complicit in re-producing patriarchal and appropriative patterns characteristic of international development research. While I feel this perceived shortcoming of my research at moments to be debilitating, I feel partial relief from declaring and highlighting this limitation.

4.2.2 Coming to terms with the reproduction of gender binaries

It is well documented and well known that sex and gender extend well beyond mainstream male/female categories. For Fausto-Sterling (1993; 2000) and Surya (2005) sex and gender should be understood as indefinable, as a broad spectrum of variations that exist on a continuum. Although, since "Western culture is deeply committed to the idea that there are only two sexes", the language and symbols that we in Western culture are iteratively exposed, lead to acceptance and re-imbrication of these notions in daily discourse (Fausto-Sterling 1993, 76).

At times my complicity in reproducing gender binaries seems inescapable. I fully acknowledge my complicity in reproducing gender binaries throughout my research. Given that I am socially situated in the same sets of relations that produce this sex and gender binary, I am unavoidably involved in reproducing these same social relations. This study does little to re-draw these gender binaries and is something I continue to

wrestle with through my scholarship. I hope that carrying with me this recognition and being open to critical reflection in my research is a solid point of departure for coming to terms with my involvement in reproducing gender binaries.

4.3 Theory and Praxis

Post-structuralism has inspired and shaped this research. Being mindful of post-structuralism's rejection of objective truths has been liberating for me a researcher as it has brought essentialist notions and awareness of the meaning attached to gendered categories to the fore. The post-structuralist theoretical framework has provided a lens that allows me to confirm that gender asymmetries are in fact a result of social processes. These theoretical tools shape the way I view the world offering me the space to critically examine social situations and continue developing my theoretical framework as a researcher.

4.4 Implications for policy and future research

By deconstructing the organizational context that in many ways promotes equity and offers liminal spaces neither reserved for men or women, I have offered through this study insight into future development and organizational research. I argue through this study that the space of the cooperative is a unique space in which female empowerment is fostered and sentiments of equity and diversity are promoted. I have attempted to bring to the fore the important role that this profession has for individuals in this part of Brazilian society. I hope that the negative stigma attached to this sector will be removed and environmental and social services that the cooperative recycling sector provides (i.e. environmental services and job creation) will become realized by Brazilian citizens and

government representatives and offer this sector a level of support that reflects their worth to society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Gender Survey (Questionário Sobre Genero)

QUESTIONÁRIO – PESQUISA SOBRE GÊNERO

1. Gênero: Homem / Mulher / Nenhum

2. Idade:

15-20 20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 51-55 56-60 61-65

3. Estado civil:

Solteiro(a) Divorciado(a)

Casado(a) Outro

4. Mora com parceiro(a)? (Sim) (Não)

Trabalho

5. Em que tipo de atividade de trabalho você geralmente participa?

Coleta() Motorista() Triagem() Prensagem() Outro

6. Você acha que há outros tipos de atividades que gostaria de fazer ou gostaria de se envolver? (Sim) (Não)

7a. Que atividade?

8. Quanto você recebe pelo seu trabalho por mês?

8a. Você está satisfeito(a) com seu ganho? (Sim) (Não)

8b. Quanto seria justo ganhar pelo o seu trabalho por mês? _____

Em Casa

9. Quanto das finanças você controla em casa?

(10%) (20%) (30%) (40%) (50%) (60%) (70%) (80%) (90%) (100%)

10. Tem filho(s)? (Sim) (Não) (Se não omitir/saltar a numero 11)

10a. Se sim, quantos? 01 02 03 04 05 Mais de 05

10b. Qual seria numero de ideal de filhos? 01 02 03 04 05 Mais de 05

10c. Eu me sinto responsável por ____ % dos deveres com o crescimento das crianças (trocar fraldas, ajudar com a escola, limpeza/banho, gastar tempo ajudando e conversando)

(10%) (20%) (30%) (40%) (50%) (60%) (70%) (80%) (90%) (100%)

11. Realizo ____ % das responsabilidades domésticas (cozinhar, limpar a casa, lavar roupa)

(10%) (20%) (30%) (40%) (50%) (60%) (70%) (80%) (90%) (100%)

12. Acho que a responsabilidade de criar os filhos deveria ser valorizada da mesma maneira que o trabalho remunerado.

(Sim) (Não)

13. Acho que questões de gênero nas cooperativas de reciclagem são necessárias.

(Concordo muito) (Concordo) (Não concordo nem discordo)

(Discordo) (Discordo completamente)

13a. Por

que? _____

_____.

14. Me sinto oprimido(a) como homem/mulher

(Sim) (Não)

14a. Se sim, de que maneira? _____.

15. Eu acho que há problemas relacionados a gênero que precisam ser tratadas na minha vida.

(Sim) (Não)

15a. Se sim, dê exemplo(s)?

16. Você acha que criar os filhos, geralmente não é valorizado o suficiente?

(Sim) (Não)

17. Acha que a violência doméstica é um problem comum?

(Sim) (Não)

18. Eu fui vítima de violência por causa do gênero no ano passado.

(Sim) (Não)

Appendix 2. Guiding research questions

Question for women

1. Would you like to drive the truck and operate a press?

Questions for men

2. Do you think that women can operate the press and drive the trucks?
3. Would you like to be the leader of the cooperative?

Questions for everybody

4. Do you feel that there is any major difference between men and women within the cooperatives?
5. Do you feel the cooperative is a space for equality?
6. Do you feel that there are any gender-based problems within the cooperative?
7. What type of support, would you like to see from the government for your cooperative?
8. Do you think that there is more equality between men and women in the cooperative or outside?
9. In general do you feel that women are more proud of their roles as recyclers?
10. Why do you think that there are such a high percentage of women leaders among Coopcent ABC cooperatives?
11. Do you think that women and men leaders have different personal qualities?
12. Do you feel that there are many differences between men and women in this cooperative?
13. Within the cooperative do men generally drive the trucks and operate the press and women do the separation?